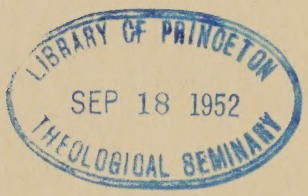

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Life's meaning: the why and
how of Christian living

LIFE'S MEANING

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LIFE'S MEANING:

The Why and How of Christian Living

BY

HENRY P. VAN DUSEN

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For

THE GENERATION

which must beat a difficult and hazardous course through the uncertainties and perils of tomorrow and especially for

JOHN and

HUGH and

DEREK

Preface

EVERY AUTHOR OWES HIS readers at least some account of why and how his book came to be. The making of *Life's Meaning: The Why and How of Christian Living* has been in this fashion.

Just twenty-five years ago, I had the privilege of spending two years in visiting college campuses from coast to coast under the sponsorship of the Student Christian Movement. At the end of that assignment, some of the conclusions formed were put together in a slight book under the title, *In Quest of Life's Meaning: Hints Toward a Christian Philosophy of Life for Students.* The book has been out of print for more than a decade, but there have been frequent requests for its reissue. Recently, the Haddam House Board proposed a new edition, rewritten. When asked how radical a revision they had in mind, my advisers counseled, "Not too drastic."

I have tried to follow their advice. But the times have changed. The mind of the writer has changed, though not in basic conviction. The outlook and vocabulary of the younger generation have changed during that catastrophic quarter-century. Moreover, in the interval I had written a good deal on similar subjects, in other settings and circumstances, especially in one of the Hazen Books, *Reality and Religion.* There was material in these publications which might well enrich and strengthen the earlier manuscript.

Here is the result. It embodies most of the original *Quest,* as well as much from the later books,[1] and not a little writing which is wholly new. It aims to retain the informal and conversational style of the original. Again, it builds heavily upon "the living experiences of young men and young women," and it is for them that the book is primarily intended.

I am grateful to several members of the Haddam House Board for suggestions, to Miss Fern Babcock for encouragement and assistance with the Bibliography, and especially to Mrs. Anne Steele Young, whose generous gift of time and skill in preparing this, and many other manuscripts, checking the proofs, and preparing the Index has capped three years of unstinting devotion as the best of secretaries.

In Quest of Life's Meaning was dedicated:

To Those Members of
The American Student Christian Movement
Men and Women
Of Whose Lives It Is an Attempt at Interpretation.

The indebtedness of that dedication I would reaffirm. But this book is written for the younger generation of today and tomorrow. Hence it is inscribed to them, especially to the three of them whom I know best.

H.P.V.D.

Union Theological Seminary
New York
April 27, 1951

[1] To the publishers who have graciously given permission for the reproduction here of certain passages from these works, especially Charles Scribner's Sons, the Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, and the Association Press, I am grateful.

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INTRODUCTION

Why Religion?

CHAPTER ONE

Why Religion?

WHEN WE BEGIN TO CONSIDER religion, the first question in our minds is likely to be, not "What kind of religion shall we have?" or "What can we believe about religion?" but a prior question, "Why religion anyhow?" Here we are, setting ourselves to spend some little time in reading a book dealing primarily with religion. But why should we be interested in religion at all? Is there anything in this business of religion—anything, that is, really important, essential? What difference does it make to life? "Religion? so what?"

It is that question which we shall seek to answer first. For, be very sure, religion never becomes real and, therefore, of any value to a person until he has given answer to that prior question, until he has satisfied himself concerning what, if any, essential place there is for this thing, religion, in the business of living. If religion is what many of us have always thought it to be—something added to life to make it more comforting or more beautiful, like the glory of a landscape, or, it may be, more difficult, more unpleasant, like the demanding regulations of the schoolroom; if religion is some fifth wheel which men have stuck onto life, "an elective in the university of life"—then it can hold little interest for you or me. We are not in-

terested in fifth wheels, especially in these tense and tragic days. The essentials rather than the electives of life concern us. Unless we discover that religion proceeds out of the heart of life itself, or in any event is such a necessary element in life that we can no more dispense with it than we can remove the lungs or heart and have a whole and living body, then we may well disregard it, for we shall have no time or inclination for it. People often ask whether religion is important. Well, either it is the one supremely important thing in life because in a very real sense it is life itself, or it isn't worth bothering about. Let's be clear on those alternatives at the outset.

Moreover, we shall seek an answer to our question in the one place where you and I could honestly accept an answer—in the facts of our own experience. We shall be thinking and talking about *life*. That is the word which will run like a thread through all we say. Our aim is to understand life and to answer some of the questions it thrusts up to us. Assuming nothing beyond our own honesty and the desire within each of us to find fuller life, we shall seek to discover its true meaning for ourselves, "a philosophy of life." We are setting out on a quest for life's meaning.

II

When we take these lives of ours and examine them under the conditions just suggested—honesty and an inner urge to higher living—we discover within each of us two great and ineradicable desires.

The first desire is *the yearning of our minds for some explanation of the universe and of our life in it.* Just as surely as our bodies when alive reach out instinctively for the things they need for their health—food, air, water, exercise—so our minds when alive reach out for some understanding, some interpretation of themselves and their world.

To the person who thinks at all, life is a perplexing business. To be sure, it did not use to be so. Through childhood and early youth, we asked no questions of life because it asked no questions of us. We slipped through year after year unthinkingly, enjoying it all but questioning it not at all. It is only lately that insistent questionings have begun to bother us. We are awaking to the fact that we are placed here on the outer fringes of a gigantic universe which is full of mystery and at the heart of a throbbing society which is full of problems.

In the first place, our study and the general knowledge which has seeped into our minds have made us realize that we are an infinitesimal part of that universe. You may go outdoors on a clear summer night and, glancing upward, let your imagination play with what smattering of astronomy you possess upon what you see there. The light from that star left it something over a hundred thousand years ago, has been traveling at the rate of 186,000 miles each second since, and has just reached the earth. For all we know, that star may have ceased to shine tens of thousands of years before our first ancestor appeared on this planet, but its light is just touching the earth. And yet, that star, visible to the naked eye, is on the hither edge of the universe. The Palomar telescope can catch millions on millions of stars unseen by us, stretching a thousand times as far again into space. But the most powerful telescope is significant less for what it discloses than for the hints it gives of universes yet undiscovered. Here are you and I, imperceptible minutiae on an infinitesimal dust spot in a far-off corner of an ocean of space. What do you make of it all?

But that is only part of the story. Behind each of us lie fifteen or twenty or twenty-five years. Ahead may lie fifty, sixty years. But behind our birth stretches a reach of time which no human mind can grasp. Two million years at least, this human species has existed, the biologists tell us.

And ahead, time of unending length. Here is your life, sixty or seventy or eighty years which seem to you to hold infinite significance, placed at a point in that long stream of existence—somewhat less than the wink of an eye in an eternity of time. What do you make of that?

To be sure, perhaps the mystery of the universe has never gripped you. It may be that some glorious panorama of nature for the first time stirs you to the meaning of *beauty*. Possibly you "discover" poetry for the first time, and realize that there are ranges on ranges of inner experience hitherto unknown to you.

On the other hand, *the world about us*—human society, whether the campus or our nation or the world—may seem suddenly to have become incredibly more complex, an intricate and baffling maze of relationships and movements and conflicts, impossible to understand or to influence. Before it all, a sense of wonder or confusion or loneliness steals over us.

But it is not only the world without which grows daily more complex and confusing. We fool ourselves if we think that that is the real trouble. We look out upon a landscape which seems topsy-turvy through the lenses of our own experience. It appears upside-down, partly at least, because the lenses are out of focus. It is mainly the *life within* which is daily becoming more complex and baffling. We find it more difficult than it used to be to understand ourselves, to manage ourselves. Not only is it more difficult to know what we believe; it is more difficult to be sure where we fit into the whole business. There begins to creep into our thinking a questioning which is likely to increase in the coming years—what is the purpose and meaning of life anyhow?

Quite possibly all this is foreign to you, outside the range of your present experience. *"If* our minds are alive" —ah, that's it! The human mind, *when it is alive,* when it steps out of immaturity, when it is set free to follow its

own deepest impulses in a universe of mystery and a world of confusion, demands some understanding of itself and of the environment in which it finds itself. If these questions and their like do not press upon you, it may be because your mind is not yet fully alive.

Let me confess frankly that, in school and college years, I had no interest whatever in religion. I would not have attended chapel if it had not been required. "Personal religious experience" of which my classmates sometimes spoke was, to me, a murky no-man's-land, of nebulous reality and less concern. In nocturnal "bull sessions," a principal delight of student days, I found my mind annoyed when the discussion moved, as it sometimes did, from the burning issues of the day to "ultimate questions" —the nature of the universe, the meaning of life. Philosophy bored me to sleep; my great interest was in politics and economics and history. It was the social service program of the Christian Association which claimed my support. But, whenever I allowed myself to really stop and think (seldom enough!) I knew perfectly well that these "ultimate questions" were also the basic questions, more fundamental and therefore more important than the fascinating problems of war and peace and social justice and national elections and campus politics. And, just because they are basic, an answer to them should precede any attempt at solution of the problems which fascinated me. Moreover, I sensed that no one could ever really escape from them, that some day they would have to be faced, and that I was dodging the really essential matters in busy preoccupation with immediate concerns.

These questions—"Whence? Whither? Why?"—must always be the fundamental and ultimate questions, not because the philosophers have ruled it so, but because they spring out of the heart of life itself. They demand an answer. Life which is real is a unity. We cannot be whole human beings as we go on living our day-by-day existence

while there stand unanswered the great queries which alone can make life intelligent. Life cannot be full and healthy while that part of it which should give direction goes unsatisfied. And so, while religion seldom begins or ends in intellectual inquiry, no living and active mind can rest satisfied until it finds an adequate explanation of life's meaning.

III

But there is something more than the desire of the mind for interpretation; that is less than half the story. *The craving of the whole life for completion* is the second and profounder universal human desire.

This longing, if we are truly alive, every one of us has known. It is the real meaning of the restlessness which is the most obvious characteristic of the younger generation today and which, to a greater or less degree, has touched the life of every one of us. It is a dissatisfaction with things as they are—with the old shibboleths and the new panaceas, with the old conventions and the new practices, with the seeming self-destruction of contemporary society and the patent self-frustration of our own generation.

The cry is for a number of things—for freedom, for reality, for fulfillment. It is, basically, a sensing that there is more in life than we have yet laid hold of, than people today are laying hold of. It is a craving for something which we call by the same word—*life*—though we do not know exactly what we mean. We cannot define it or describe it; but we are certain that it is there, and that we shall recognize it when we meet it. It is the inarticulate reaching out of all that is best within us for "something more." Youth's restlessness is, in no small part, life's instinctive desire for completion.

Like the mind's desire for understanding, this craving for completion comes upon us in many different ways. With a few, it is a sense of solitude, of inner loneliness of

which we have already spoken. With some, it is more nearly a mood of aimlessness; perhaps the decision of our lifework presses on us, and we are uncertain where we fit in; we have discovered no particular meaning in life. With some, it is a realization of inner weakness; defeat in moral struggles, possibly; inability to handle our own impulses or our human relations. With many, it is a gradual realization that our life is stunted and poor, that those who live fully possess a richness and depth and satisfaction unknown to us. Basically, it is an awakening to a consciousness of personal destiny, that life was made for something great and rich and triumphant, and that it is not really life until that is attained.

Here is the deeper meaning of our search for explanation. What we crave is not so much an interpretation to which the mind can give a confident assent (though we want that) as a program for life which can bring to it fullness and meaning. Intellectual explanation alone never wholly satisfies. Life's most urgent question is not "Why?" but "How?" Life's deepest need is not understanding, but power.

Moreover, whenever we are honest with ourselves, we recognize that our knowledge far outruns our practice. We often think what we want is to know what we should believe or be or do. What we really want is to be and do what we know we ought to. The most sincere and urgent query of our spirits is not "What can I believe?" or "What should I do?" but "How *can* I live as I know I should?" For this reason, men's most pressing demand of religion is fulfillment.

IV

The mind's desire for explanation, the life's desire for completion—these, then, are the two basic yearnings of our being. Light on the mystery of life, power for the mastery of life—these are what we want. It is precisely

these two things which men through the centuries have found in religion.

For religion, at its heart, is not a sense of beauty, as when one sees a glorious sunset or hears great music or is awed by the majesty of the heavens. Religion is not an emotional experience, an inner feeling of peace or joy or exaltation at moments of high inspiration. Religion is not absorption in a favorite interest, as when we say of a man, "His work is his religion" or "Golf is his religion." Religion is not subscription to a creed or formula, not participation in a liturgy, not membership in an organization. Religion is not human friendship, an intimate comradeship with others. Religion is not even good intentions, high purposes, a kindly spirit. Religion is the reaching out of one's whole being—mind, body, spirit, emotions, intuitions, affections, will—for completion, for inner unity, for true relation with those about us, for right relation to the universe in which we live. Religion is *life,* a certain kind of life, life as it should and could be, a life of harmony within and true adjustment without—life, therefore, in harmony with the life of God himself.

v

Now, let us put this reading of religion to a double test. First, let us look at religion as it is likely to appear most spontaneously in day-by-day experience, the life of youth. Then let us look at the particular occasions in life when most people, almost all people, turn toward religion.

Some years ago, a group of college students were talking rather intimately and frankly about their interest in religion. They happened to be leaders of the national Student Christian Movement, drawn from all over the country. They were comparing what in each one's own experience had first turned him toward religion. Ulti-

mately, the discussion came, as it was bound to, to the query: "What about God? How can one be sure of God? When are *you* sure of God?" Quite spontaneously, three students spoke up in quick succession.

The first was a sensitive, solitary sort of girl from a West Coast college. She blurted out, "There is only one time when I really feel sure of God. When I am all alone, high up on a mountainside overlooking the Pacific toward sunset, sometimes in the quiet and beauty of that place, I am absolutely certain of God."

The second was also a woman. She happened to be a "pre-med" in an eastern city college, deep in research for her senior thesis on a complicated carbohydrate molecule. She replied, "I'm afraid I've never been much of a nature lover. I'm city-born and city-bred. I haven't an idea what you mean. But often in the chemistry lab, when my carbohydrate is under the microscope and I get some inkling of its complexity and delicacy and order, I wonder how people can doubt the existence of God. Yes, I sense his presence quite clearly."

The third was a Yale undergraduate, absorbed in work for down-and-outers in New Haven. He broke in, "You two seem to me to be talking nonsense. Beauty means nothing to me. I've never studied chemistry. But whenever I spend an evening at the Yale Hope Mission, talking with the unlucky fellows who drift in there, trying to give them a shred of confidence in the worth of living, then I'm dead certain of God and of his concern for those men. The only God I know is one who is desperately in earnest about injustice and human need."

Each of the three students felt sure of God, at times. But to each, certainty came in quite different fashion—in Nature's grandeur, through experimental science, at the heart of society's problems. Each professed to know nothing of the experiences of the others.

It was sheer coincidence, but one cannot fail to be

struck by the close parallels to the three familiar aspects of men's experience of the highest—through appreciation of beauty, through search for truth, through response to moral challenge. To each, the appeal of religion came to *one* of the traditional sides of human nature—to the emotions, or to the mind, or to conscience and will.

These students were fairly typical of people everywhere in their certainty of God. Most people rely on one or another of these three types of evidence.

However, it is obvious that all three approaches are necessary in any comprehensive experience of life. Emotions *and* intellect *and* will must each play its part in a whole and full human life. Beauty and truth and the facts of social need must each give its evidence for an adequate understanding of our world. The most intimate suggestions of personal feeling, the testimony of the fathomless universe, the drama of mankind's struggle must all be consulted concerning God. One of the foremost men of science has recently stated that he finds his interests today working out mainly along three lines—in his professional researches in biochemistry, in the moving liturgy of Anglo-Catholic worship, in the social significance of communism. He is not only a brilliant scientist, but also a strikingly well-rounded, a thoroughly modern, and a profoundly religious man.

It would appear that religion is somehow intimately involved in every major aspect of man's life, of his relationship to the world of men in which he lives, and to the universe which surrounds him.

VI

Speaking of the occasions in life when most people turn toward the Church (or religion), Dean Sperry says:

> The world seeks the church, uncritically, habitually, at those times when life matters most. Young people who profess

to have outgrown religion still enter the church to be made man and wife. Parents who have drifted away from the church still bring their children back for baptism. The last low whispers of the world's dead are not uniformly burdened with God's name, but the church is always requisitioned to speak that name over those dead. In obedience to some deep unreasoned prompting men seek churches when life is most real.[1]

Men seek religion *"when life matters most . . . when life is most real."* If true, that is a remarkable fact. But when *is* life most real? Dean Sperry speaks of three occasions. We may add a fourth—four milestones on almost every normal human pilgrimage.[2] One of them looms just ahead of most of you. The second is a little further on, already within thought if not within sight. The third lies over the horizon. The fourth stands at the end of the road, far beyond our present outlook and interest.

The first is "coming of age," not simply reaching twenty-one, but attaining the measure of the stature of the fullness of manhood or womanhood. It is *the achievement of maturity.*

This may happen at adolescence; it may occur much later. It is often symbolized by graduation from school or college. It may be marked by getting one's first job, a "declaration of independence" from all the dependencies of early years upon family and home. It may be the choice of lifework. It may crystallize very suddenly in some particular experience, perhaps the death of one's parents when, almost overnight, in a moment, we feel ourselves

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[1] Willard L. Sperry, *Reality in Worship* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 30.

[2] Dr. Elton Trueblood has singled out four closely parallel aspects of experience in his *The Common Ventures of Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949). In *Reality and Religion* (New York: Association Press, 1940), I have suggested two others also (pp. 22-29).

thrust up a whole generation, boyhood or girlhood is laid aside, and we step forth, an adult at last.

The truer and deeper meaning of the achievement of maturity, however, is always an awakening to a sense of personal destiny, a realization of "what life's all about," at whatever age it may come. It is a time of reality, "when life matters most."

It is, characteristically, a stirring experience, this coming of age. It is no accident and no mere deference to tradition that each June finds ministers hopping from school graduation to college commencement, preaching baccalaureate sermons and giving commencement addresses. Rather it is an almost unconscious recognition that this first great milestone in each person's life, this time when, for a few moments at least, life is seen in truer perspective, is also a profoundly religious occasion. "Men seek religion whenever life is most real."

The second occasion of great reality is *marriage*. Who would question that? It is, in ideal and in intention, *life's one irrevocable decision*. It is the one fork in life's pathway to which we can never really return to retake. Moreover, it radically alters every aspect of our existence. For everyone, it is an adventurous lunge into the unknown and the unpredictable. Like Abraham of old, we are called to go out into a country which is to be our own, but we must go forth not knowing whither we go. In that profound sense, we all marry "in faith."

No one who has the privilege of drawing close to young people standing on that threshold will ever doubt that marriage is an occasion normally marked by two moods. It is a time of "reality," when life is most real. And it is a time of religion, when we seek the church. Many a man or woman is more nearly his "real" self, his deeper and true self, then than he has ever been before. Not at the actual wedding ceremony itself, necessarily. But in the

steps which precede it, in the intention to which it points, in the vows then declared:

> To have and to hold from this day forward,
> For better, for worse,
> For richer, for poorer,
> In sickness and in health,
> To love and to cherish,
> 'Til death us do part.

That is at once the most momentous and the most utterly "real" vow our human life knows.

Moreover, any marriage which is more than a blasphemous travesty by two irresponsible infants, which casts an eye into the future toward the "generations yet to be" and thus discovers its fuller meaning, is inescapably a profoundly religious occasion. No wonder "young people who profess to have outgrown religion still enter the church to be made man and wife." It may be, it should be, the "realest" thing they will ever do. "Men seek religion when life matters most."

This second occasion leads on to the next—*parenthood,* the bringing of a new life into the world.

In that experience, also, both father and mother may rise to heights of spiritual discernment, of tenderness, of character which they may never touch again. At one and the same time, they are closest both to life's instinctive roots and to life's triumphant fulfillment.

Here we are more intimately related to Nature than we have ever been before. But also we are closer to God than we may ever have been. For we thus become active sharers in God's own nature, creativity. In parenthood, we become his partners in creation, "fellow workmen with God."

In the intimate linkage of religion and sex, which is sometimes cited for religion's discredit, there is much truth. In the fulfillment of sex's true intention, we are linked at once to that which is most primitive and that

which is most sublime. We are made servants of Nature and we become fellow creators with God. Any treatment of religion which fails to recognize that fact overlooks its deep rootage in the primordial instincts of man's nature. By the same token, any exposition of the place of sex in human experience which overlooks that fact is guilty of hopeless superficiality, not to say misinterpretation. It fails to set sex in the context of its fulfillment, by which alone it can be rightly understood.[3]

It is no accident that, in their partnership in parenthood, men and women find themselves drawn, unconsciously, undeliberately, unexpectedly close to God, within the aura of religion. No wonder that "parents who have drifted away from the church still bring their children back for baptism"!

We are, by deepest nature, *creators*. We were made to be creators. If it cannot be the initiation of new life, it may be the invention or building of a new object or the creation of some form of beauty.

This is evident very early in the child's life when the youngster who up to now has found no use for blocks and toys but to throw about and tear down, suddenly discovers a fascination in putting together and building up, a toy town or a bridge or a boat. This is the real transition from infancy to boyhood or girlhood—response to the inner urge to make, to build.

We see it again, a little later in the young person's development, in the desire to paint—no longer just to daub colors on paper or wall, but to paint a house or

[3] Here is a part, though only a part, of the utter superficiality, indeed absurdity, of Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey's widely read interpretations of sex. *The Sexual Behavior of the Human Male* (Philadelphia: Saunders Publishing Company, 1948) and *The Sexual Behavior of the Human Female* are as adequate accounts of their subject as a description of the movement of Dr. Einstein's fingers when he adds 2 and 2 would be as an account of his theory of relativity; or as a mathematical computation of musical tones would be as an account of Bach's B-Minor Mass.

flower or dog or bit of scenery, however crude the execution. Or, in the desire to write a story, a poem. Here is the secret of the transition from boyhood or girlhood to manhood or womanhood—response to the inner urge to create. Every school or college should know this: the thing in youth to lay hold of is *the creative impulse,* in however varied ways it may express itself.

Medicine has lately rediscovered this elemental fact as the key to healing depressed or deranged minds—occupational therapy, it is called—setting the fingers to making, building, drawing, painting, modeling—any kind of creative activity—and thus restoring sanity and happiness. At the opposite end of the scale, that of balanced personality, Mr. Churchill and General Eisenhower are not the only men of great achievement who have discovered entirely new satisfaction and fulfillment in response to this starved and neglected impulse which lies at the very core of every one of us, the impulse to create beauty. This impulse of creation may find a wholly satisfying and constructive outlet through teaching or nursing or scientific research or music or any one of half a hundred other types of creative activity. Many and many a person, man or woman, who has not been given the privilege of parenthood has found the joy and fulfillment of creation.[4]

To create that which is new and lovely and true and holy *is* to fulfill self. It is to achieve kinship with the very source of Reality. It is, whether consciously or not, to become partners with God himself. For God, by his very nature, is Creator. And we, in our inmost beings, are creators also—fellow creators with God.

Dean Sperry speaks of one more episode when men seek the church, turning toward religion. It is the final and decisive episode to which all else leads, when we stand on

[4] On this point, women in particular will be much interested in Maude Royden's autobiographical testimony in *Sex and Common Sense* (London: Hurst & Blackett, Ltd., 1947).

the very margin of human existence, to bid farewell to one "long loved and lost awhile" or, perhaps, to yield to the constraint of that journey ourselves—an unforeseeable, unpredictable journey—the episode of *death.*

This episode, like childbirth, we tend to shroud in silence, to avoid talk of it or even thought of it, especially when we are young. There is no more striking proof of the complete secularization and utter superficiality of the prevailing outlook today than its uncomfortableness in the face of death, its recoil from any mention of death.[5] Yet we cannot evade it, either for others or for ourselves. This is *life's one inescapable event.*

Occasionally, this inexorable fact of human existence forces itself upon us. It may be when someone very near to us dies. It may be when a person who has meant much to the life of his time passes beyond mortal sight, and great throngs crowd some church, dumbly, almost unthinkingly, yet inevitably—some of them strangely uneasy in the presence of death and in the precincts of religion, yet knowing themselves in the one right place on that supremely significant occasion. They come to hear awesome, mysterious, familiar words:

> This corruptible must put on incorruption;
> This mortal must put on immortality.
> Death is swallowed up in victory.
> Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory
> through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life . . . nor things present nor things to come . . . nor anything in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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[5] Douglas Steere drives this point home in discussing "Modern Western Society's Concealment of Death" in his admirable Ingersoll Lecture, "Death's Illumination of Life," Ch. V. of *On Beginning from Within* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943).

Death *is* life's one inescapable event. Life inexorably brings us to that shore, bearing us

> With unperturbed pace,
> Deliberate speed, majestic instancy

toward it. Here, as at our coming into the world, Nature once more takes command; and there is no escape. Again we are linked to that which is at once elemental and ultimate. Again that silent Parent who has shepherded us into life and is to bear us hence draws our unwilling spirits to reality, and turns our thoughts toward God.

Death is life's inescapable reminder that our true human destiny throughout our whole life is pilgrimage, perpetual, eternal pilgrimage. Likewise, death brings the final, decisive proof that our life is inwoven with religion. "The last low whispers of the world's dead are not uniformly burdened with God's name, but the church is always requisitioned to speak that name over those dead."

Note that these four crucial episodes are not all times of trouble, of weakness, of need, when our cry is for a crutch, a comfort, an escape. As it happens, one of them, Death, may be an occasion of perplexity, of uncertainty, of loneliness. But the other three are all occasions of uncommon freedom, exaltation, triumph. One is a time of testing sadness, three of consummate gladness. Here is a clear refutation of the oft-bandied charge that men turn to religion only in difficulty or fear.

Note also that, of these four pivotal experiences, at least three are beyond the present range of most young people's firsthand acquaintance. As we said above, "One looms just ahead of most of you. The second is a little further on. The third lies over the horizon. The fourth stands far beyond our present outlook and interest." That is to say, when we look to these episodes for such light as they may cast on the meaning of life and religion's role in it, we are

pointing to evidence outside youth's personal knowledge, therefore evidence with meager convincing power. Yet, no one would deny that these are in fact *the four greatest occasions* in every normal life. This is some part of the reason why young people so often are uninterested in religion, wondering why in the world their elders find more meaning in the church than they do. Youth has not yet come into those areas of experience where religion is most compellingly self-validating. I realize how unpalatable it is to any young person to sense the suggestion, "You cannot yet understand because you haven't yet experienced." Unpalatable though it be, this corresponds with the facts. Moreover, any young person who really wants to comprehend life will seek to grasp the significance of this evidence, not yet accessible to firsthand knowledge, through anticipatory imagination.

Again, note that all four occasions are marked by two moods. They are times of reality, when life matters most. And they are times when the human spirit, perhaps unconsciously, sometimes unwillingly, yet almost irresistibly, turns to God, to religious faith. It is true that "in obedience to some deep unreasoned prompting, men seek churches (religion) when life is most real."

More than that, all four are meaningful far beyond the immediate occasions. They are symbols, reminders of what life really is:

> Coming of age is a reminder that the *meaning of life* is the *achievement of maturity;* and that that achievement is through the alignment of our lives with the intention of their Author.
>
> *Marriage* is a reminder that the *secret of life* is *love;* and that all true love is of God, for God is Love, and we love because he first loved us.
>
> *Parenthood* is a reminder that the *purpose of life* is

creation; and that creation links us as partners to God, the Creative Spirit.

Death is a reminder that the *destiny of life* is *pilgrimage,* eternal pilgrimage; and that God alone can guide and shepherd us on that pilgrimage.

What we discern on these occasions of great reality should guide us along the entire course of our life. What we are at these supreme moments, that we should be our whole lives through.

VII

What have we learned from our inquiry thus far? Five things at least:

1. *Religion is part of the warp and woof of life, real life, its whole course through.* That is proved by the origin of religion in each man's experience, by the persistence of religion among all peoples and through all ages, and especially by the fact that when life is most real, whether joyous or confounding, men turn to religion.

We are religious because we cannot help ourselves. Interest in religion, then, is no impersonal, academic discussion, artificially stimulated and sustained. It is a coming to the surface of inextinguishable desires inherent in life itself. The experience of religion is no fifth wheel, no plastering onto life of a creed or form or unessential addendum. It is the coming of life to its own fulfillment, as natural and inevitable as the leafing of the trees in spring or the cry of a new-born babe for food. Religion arises inevitably in man's response to his most elemental, persistent experiences. If not itself an instinct, it is firmly rooted in our basic and true natures.[6] It is part and parcel of every man's normal existence.

[6] See C. Lloyd Morgan, "Instinct," in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* Vol. VII, p. 360: "If the question be raised whether the religious sentiments . . . are instinctive, our answer must depend on the connotation to be attached to this perplexingly elusive term. That in the

2. *Religion is the central concern of life.* Religion may not be especially involved with *all* the issues of life. It is involved with life's *great* issues. The four occasions to which we have called attention are inescapable milestones on every normal human pilgrimage. Men vary greatly in the directions and courses and characters of their pathways. But almost all of us pass through these gateways, and here we meet religion. Religion may be untrue; it may be dangerously false. But, whatever else you may say about it, religion is not unimportant; it is the most important concern of life.

3. *Religion should be the source of the highest good* for each man's life and for society, but, like all other aspects of man's nature that are rooted in the very necessities of his being—ambition, love, friendship, faith—*religion is not necessarily true and admirable.* Like other aspects, it is never merely neutral, colorless. It may be, and often has been, the source of unspeakable harm. It may be beneficial or harmful; it must be one or the other.

4. *Religion is concerned, not primarily with our minds, but with the whole of life.* For our "philosophy of life" must be our interpretation of the *whole* of our experience. That whole is a multifold thing to which every side of our natures contributes. Religion, therefore, is no arid intellectual query, an affair of speculation only, but an active, vital matter into which our whole beings enter, involving our response to all the experiences life brings to us. Throughout our discussion of religion, the theoretical and the practical must be inextricably intermixed. If we find God, we must reach him with our whole selves.

By the same token, the conceptions of God and of the good life which our minds formulate must be the concep-

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course of life they may become instinctive, in the sense that they rise unbidden and spontaneously within the mind without explicit rational backing, when the circumstances are of the appropriate kind, can scarcely be questioned." (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927).

tions to which our whole experience leads us. The great convictions and certainties—*all* of them—are implicit in life. The light we require for our understanding of reality and the strength we need for our soul's courageous advance are to be sought here. It is in the simplest, most elemental, most familiar but most profound affairs of normal experience that the essential truths about life and the world lie embedded. It is in and through human lives that those truths are clearly revealed and lay hold upon us —through *all* human lives in broken and opaque fashion; with special clarity, through great and true lives; with peculiar grip, through our own lives; altogether convincingly, through One Supreme Life. In and through the noblest human living, it is possible to learn more of the truth and meaning of our world than in any other fashion. The steady and sustaining assurance of the power of that truth is to be had through confidence in lives where it is most clearly embodied. Entrance into the truth for ourselves, empowerment by it, is not achieved through cleverness of intellect or quantity of information, not through involved reasoning or profound logic, not through some special revelation or mystic vision or secret insight. It is through eagerness, earnestness, honesty of seeking; and through integrity, daring, fidelity of living. Character is the doorway to reality.

5. *Finally, for fullness of life, true religion, high religion, is an absolute necessity.* It is no addendum, no luxury, no "elective in the university of living."

There is a homely old proverb, "Turn a horse loose, and he will return to his stall; turn a man's soul loose, and it will return home, to God." The great spirits down the centuries have sensed that. Two of the greatest have made it the summation of their experience of life: "God that made the world and all things therein . . . hath made of one blood all nations of men . . . that they should seek the Lord if haply they might feel after him and find

him." [7] "God has so made us for himself that our hearts are restless until they find rest in him." [8]

All we have been saying has been given classic portraiture by Jesus in the story of a lad who had gone the last lengths of dissipation and departure from reality. "And, when he came to *himself,* he said, . . . 'I will arise, and go to my Father.' " [9]

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[7] Paul, Acts 17:24-27, in part.
[8] Augustine, *Confessions.*
[9] Luke 15:17, 18, in part.

THE MEANING OF LIFE

The Conditions of the Quest
The Author of Life—God
The Master of Life—Jesus
Why the Church?
Obstacles to Belief—Evil

CHAPTER TWO

The Conditions of the Quest

IT IS A FUNDAMENTAL principle for the discovery of truth in any realm that there are certain prior conditions to be met. This is true in science. The chemist who is searching out some new discovery must first set up an apparatus which may require weeks for its assembling. He must possess what is sometimes called scientific background, a thorough knowledge of what earlier pathfinders have discovered and of all that is to be known in the particular field of his experimentation. Then he must create with painstaking patience and precision the special conditions of his own hypothesis—the exact mixture of chemicals, the precise temperature, the required atmospheric conditions, and whatever else is necessary. In many and many a case, certain faculties which we tend to regard as the direct antithesis of science—imagination, intuition, and so on—must pioneer the way long before his experiment begins. Scientific discovery, as the great scientists interpret it, is a process in which imagination, intuition, and faith leap far ahead of the facts and seize hold of truth; then a foundation of facts to support the hypothesis is gradually erected.[1]

Some years ago, announcement was made of an inven-

[1] On this whole matter, see the justly famous discussion in Poincaré, *Science et Méthode,* Ch. 3.

tion which revolutionized the radio industry and made possible the present popularization of radio. The inventor, a quiet, diffident little man, who for twenty years had eked out a scanty existence as professor in an eastern technical school, became a multimillionaire overnight. The story of his invention is not known. He experimented with no apparatus to achieve it. For days and weeks and months, he sat quietly over a writing pad, filling sheet after sheet with figures, scratching, correcting, tearing up, and starting afresh. When his mathematical formula was finally completed, the apparatus was set up. It worked perfectly at once. He had discovered and fulfilled the prior conditions; the truth was immediately revealed.

Sometimes we talk glibly as though truth lay about like stray shells on a sandy beach, to be picked up for the seeking. On the contrary, truth, like anything else of supreme value, such as friendship or love or beauty, is dearly bought. It admits to the vision of its presence only those who have fulfilled to the last iota the conditions truth itself has laid down for entrance. Those conditions are not only of mind or of skill but also of character—humility, honesty, industry, patience, devotion, faith. Indeed, a large part of the discovery of truth is the discovery and fulfilling of these prior conditions.

This principle applies to all realms of truth. But in none is it so important as in the ultimate truths about life. How inevitable that is! Here we are dealing with the most delicate and important of all types of truth, that which in a sense includes and yet surpasses all the others. If only we had common sense to see ourselves in perspective, how ridiculous many of our assumptions would appear—the assumption, for instance, that these ultimate truths should be so obvious that anyone at any time could read them. As a matter of fact, many of our intellectual difficulties and most of our practical difficulties arise just here—we

never fulfill the conditions through which alone truth could make itself known to us.

I recall a girl in a western college who had committed some terrible offense against her own conscience. So horrible was it to her that she could tell it to no one. She had made no confession of it to God or to any human being, no effort to clear her own mind about it. Yet she kept complaining, "I have waited and waited to have God become a reality to me. Why doesn't he make himself real to me?" How could he when she refused to take the steps which would make it possible for God to reach her? Many of us echo that same complaint. "God isn't real to me. This business of religion is all Greek to me," we say. How could it be otherwise? We have not fulfilled the conditions under which a living Spirit of Love could make himself felt in our lives.

But this is to put the whole matter negatively. I want to state positively my belief that, *if* we recognize and fulfill the necessary and inevitable conditions of our quest, truth will in the end reveal itself to us with satisfying certainty. To be sure, it will be no easy and unwavering vision. Truth is always difficult to hold. We must fight ever for our grasp of it; that, indeed, is one of the conditions of possessing it. God has not written himself across the face of the universe so that he who runs may read. But neither is he playing a capricious hide-and-seek with those who earnestly desire him. Granted the fluctuations and uncertainties which are seldom absent from the experience of even the best of men, truth does eventually make itself known to those who conscientiously fit themselves to receive and discern it.

II

What, then, are the conditions for the discovery of the truth about life, for the discovery of God and the entrance into intimate fellowship with him?

The first applies to every field of discovery—*knowledge and equipment adequate to the task.* This is as necessary for the seeker after God as it is for the chemist. Yet people think they can embark on this pre-eminently difficult and delicate task with no equipment save good intentions, and find the truth they seek. As Dr. Douglas Adam once said, "With some, doubt is an attitude of intellectual adventure, with quite inadequate mental equipment for the experiment."

In this realm, since it is a philosophy of life we are seeking, the *knowledge* needed, the material for our work, is an adequate experience of life—an experience won through our own lives or through intimate acquaintance with the lives of others. I remember my own intellectual difficulties about religion when I was an undergraduate. I realize now that there was not enough knowledge of life there to have intellectual difficulties about. They were theoretical, unreal, childish. It is only in the face of the facts of life in all their cruelty and mystery that true doubt comes. Too often in the field of religious thought, the seeker is like a child trying to construct the George Washington Bridge with his toy blocks, or searching out the secrets of the heavens with a magnifying glass.

And in this realm "equipment adequate to the task" is a mind sufficiently able and trained to grapple with the intricate problems involved. This does not mean that only the intellectually acute can understand life or discover its secrets, for it is of the very essence of spiritual truth that it reveals itself to the humble and the untutored. It does mean that only those who possess the needed equipment had best dally with the intellectual and philosophical problems of religion.

How gloriously inconsistent we moderns are, and none more so than the present-day undergraduate! We distrust anyone else's say-so. We dislike and despise authority of every kind. We will find truth for ourselves, or we will

not accept it. "Every man his own theologian," is our motto. At all costs, we are determined to be thoroughly scientific.

Scientific? Is this in fact the way you have acquired such scientific knowledge as you possess? Take the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Did you discover that? Few of us indeed can even profess to have verified it. Or, consider the location of the South Pole and the condition of the earth's surface there. Have you firsthand knowledge of that? Have you verified that discovery? Yet you assume it is true. What about the date of the Battle of Marathon, and the disposition of the rival forces in it? How much personal recollection of that turning point in history can you claim? The plain fact is that, in almost every realm of truth, such "knowledge" as we assume ourselves to possess has been discovered by others; it is accepted by us on the "authority" of the experts. At the most, we can verify what they tell us. Most of what we take for granted and live by from day to day, we believe on someone else's say-so. But, in this realm of supreme and supremely difficult and delicate truth, we boldly assert our own competence, eschew all "authority," and will give no credence to the "experts."

In this book, we are making the bold assumption that to a considerable degree we *can* discover the truth we seek for ourselves, that every man can be his own theologian. But we do well to recognize how presumptuous that assumption is, and to accept at their full the exacting demands in knowledge and equipment which are involved.

III

A second condition which follows closely on the first was referred to in the preceding chapter—*the recognition that truth is not the discovery of the mind alone, but of the whole personality.* For truth concerns the whole of

life, and the whole of life is a unity. Truth, therefore, must be our best interpretation of the evidence and experience which all of life brings. We must realize that all the organs of our nature when they are functioning fully are feeling after truth and leading toward truth—that mysterious and baffling faculty which we call intuition; our emotions at their highest; the sense of beauty; most of all, our awareness of right and wrong, our moral valuations, the way our natures react to definite issues and choices which present themselves.

Here is one reason that religion is so unreal to many people. They are seeking God only with their minds. How unreasonable that is! If the mind were the only means of discovering God, then religion would become the prerogative of the intellectually gifted.[2] And that would be blasphemy against God himself. As Horace Bushnell once said, "The geometer might as well expect to solve his problems by the function of smell as a responsible soul to find God by the understanding alone." Yet many of us persist in attempting just that. And this tendency to seek God with the mind alone is a characteristically modern trait. In this day when we are ridding ourselves of fragmented conceptions of life and when the great cry is, "Life is a unity," we still try to search with only our minds in this field of truth seeking which so pre-eminently involves life as a whole. Truth never comes to us fully that way.

IV

There is another fact to be recognized about the nature of truth itself. Not only is it to be found only by the

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[2] "If the mind were the final means of apprehending God, we should be reduced at once to the position of Cicero with reference to the Roman religion—that only the intellectually gifted can be saved." Henry B. Wright, *The Will of God and a Man's Lifework* (New York: Association Press, 1909), p. 124.

whole personality; *it is of the very nature of truth that it reveals itself one step at a time, and the second step seldom appears until the first has been taken.* That does not suit us. We want to know the whole story before we begin. We want to see the end of the road before we start. This is especially true with regard to our careers. We say in effect, "Show me precisely where this path will land me, and I'll tell you whether I'll take it. Tell me beforehand what you expect me to do if I agree to do your will, and I'll tell you whether I'll agree to do it." Truth does not work that way. There is great insight in the line of "Lead, Kindly Light," by John Henry Newman, "I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me." If truth seems a puzzling blur to you, ask yourself the question, "Have I taken the few steps already clear to me?" The light you seek may wait for that; for the quest of truth is an adventure, an adventure in which we move forward step by step. Remember, too, that to face truth or duty and dodge it, to see a step and fail to take it, is never to see that step quite so clearly again.

This recognition requires open-minded and expectant tentativeness about many of our beliefs. To many queries, we must reply frankly, "I do not know." Or, better, "I do not know *yet*." It warns us against a too neat and final completeness in our philosophy of life. Of possibly the profoundest theologian of this century, the late Baron Friedrich von Hügel, it was said:

> It would be a waste of time to attempt to deduce from his writings anything like a complete or systematic philosophy of religion. His thought may perhaps best be conceived as a mine, access to which may be obtained by sinking at various points independent shafts. The stratification will be found to be identical. The stuff is there all right, richly and widely distributed; but we must not be disappointed if we find it extraordinarily difficult—perhaps even impossible—to estab-

lish underground connections. Perhaps we cannot sink a shaft deep enough for that.

So it is with our fumbling attempts to plumb Ultimate Reality. Ore of the purest metal, we find, in unbelievable richness and variety, but we can never fully establish the ultimate connections nor sink a shaft deep enough for that.

Let us be quite clear on this point. We eschew finality, not because there is no finality in truth, but because there can never be finality in men's comprehension of One whose majesty and might so far exceed our powers of apprehension, whose beauty and goodness so far exceed our powers of appreciation. Our "agnosticism" is not that of a mind which knows nothing, but of a mind aware of the very limited range of its knowledge. It holds its convictions, not with a tentativeness which expects to surrender them at any moment in the face of contradictory evidence, but with the tentativeness which expects them to be caught up in, and fulfilled by, larger truth. Professor Eddington has likened the advance of scientific theory to the putting together of a jigsaw puzzle.[3] Older views are not so much disproved and discarded as incorporated within a fuller perspective. A patch of blue, originally diagnosed as a woman's parasol, appears later as a tiny lake, but finally takes its place within the vastness of the heavens. So with each man's apprehension of God.

The agnosticism we are counseling is the agnosticism of a healthy humility. There are two types of agnosticism with diametrically opposite practical consequences. One laments, "I do not know anything. I can never know anything." The other affirms, "I do not *yet* know this thing. I shall never know everything." One faces a dim future shadowed by unrelieved mystery; the other a future faintly illumined by increasing light. One confronts deepening dusk; the other, brightening dawn.

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[3] A. S. Eddington, *The Nature of the Physical World*, p. 352.

This recognition also demands tolerance and catholicity in our attitudes toward others, especially toward those whose views may strike us as arrant nonsense. Not that our neighbor may not be wrong—he may well be. But it is always possible that his "nonsense" may be just his hold on some aspect of the immeasurable greatness of God which has escaped our notice or eluded our grasp. The right answer to many of the apparent contradictions in human thought is "Not 'either-or,' but 'both-and.' "

This recognition carries its priceless boon—its gift of promise, of high expectancy, expectancy of great and never-completed discoveries. That Reality which we seek ever more fully and truly to know is not only unfathomably vast but also inexhaustibly rich. It is this fact which promises growth, adventure, unending advance in the knowledge of God and in fellowship with him. God's gifts come to us bit by bit, but they come afresh unendingly.

v

Again, *no discovery of significant truth is possible without the determination to push through to an answer at whatever cost—the condition of mental earnestness.* The search for truth is a struggle; no one has a right to embark on it unless he is determined to see his search through to the end, cost what it may.

God's way with life from the amoeba to man has never been to fulfill desire but to tempt to effort. From the dawn of history God's way with man has not been to instruct but to tempt to discovery. We should not expect the most important of all truth spread out like an advertisement, but hidden as a treasure.[4]

There is no place for intellectual dillydallying here.

[4] Lily Dougal and C. W. Emmett, *The Lord of Thought* (London: Student Christian Movement, 1923), p. 9.

I recall a discussion in a college fraternity house. The subject was the familiar one, "Can we believe in God?" On the floor was seated an especially attractive lad, keen, alert, obviously dead in earnest. Finally, after a considerable silence, he blurted out with evident sincerity, "I'd give anything if I could believe in God. But I just can't!" The leader of the discussion put three questions in quick succession: "How many hours have you spent in the past month trying to think your way through to belief in God?" "Not one," came the answer. "How many books have you read in the past year which could have thrown light on this problem for you?" "Not one." "How many people have you talked to who might have helped you find a way through some of your difficulties?" "Not one." Oh, yes; he would "give anything" if only he could believe in God!

So few of us know what honest intellectual inquiry is. A sharp statement and one that will arouse immediate resentment, but it is true. Most of us in this modern day are trained not to think truly but to think cleverly. And clever thought is not honest intellectual inquiry.

No better example of the difficulties for honest thought could be suggested than the intellectual life of our colleges—class work and examinations, for instance. As the student sits in examination, what is controlling his writing—the honest quest for light or the desire to make grades, to spread scanty knowledge so as to appear as impressive as possible, to turn back the kind of information which experience teaches is most wanted and in the form which is known to be most acceptable? To ask the question seems gratuitous. Academic work may be the poorest possible preparation of the mind for finding truth. Or, consider college debating. Usually its real purpose is not to reveal truth, but to win arguments. I sometimes think debating has turned out more minds absolutely unqualified for life's great enterprise of truth seeking than almost anything else I know. It is great for sharpening wits, but

what more? Or, still more serious, consider the general intellectual atmosphere of our contemporary cultured life. The premium is on brilliance and cleverness, wit rather than wisdom. There is great fascination in the intellectual game. It is comparatively easy to bluff wisdom one does not possess. Once the bluff is successful, one readily forgets that it was a bluff. Then one is well set on the path to that cultured sophistication which makes the tedious and disciplined inquiry after truth impossible.

There are certain marks of the genuine seeker after truth. Almost always he can be detected—by the very tone of his voice in discussion, by his quick recognition of the incompleteness of his own discovery of truth, by readiness to admit new light—above all, by an eagerness to launch forth experimentally on any new truth glimpsed, verifying his discoveries in his own experience.

These, then, are among the necessary intellectual conditions for the discovery of truth:

a. A mind sufficiently able and sufficiently well trained to grapple with the particular problems under consideration
b. Some knowledge of the issues and of what others have thought of them; this implies historical perspective and wide reading through which it comes
c. An adequate search for help; consultation with those, our contemporaries and thinkers of the past, who might throw light on our perplexities
d. Readiness to lay aside fondly cherished prejudices and to admit mistakes before new light
e. Eagerness to test fresh truth in our own living at whatever cost
f. Determination to see the quest through to the end.

Those who do not possess such equipment need not think themselves excluded from truth; the most significant truths about life reveal themselves to simplicity and

honesty rather than to richly furnished intelligence. But those who are drawn to the purely intellectual enterprise will need such equipment. Honest inquiry, fulfilling these conditions, must guide life toward religion's truth and religion's strength.

VI

Finally, there is one other and even more fundamental condition, a condition which few of us recognize today and yet without which the search for truth must be wholly in vain. It is the condition of *moral honesty—the willingness to remold your life in accordance with the truth discovered.*

For truth, as we have said, is a rare flower, the supremely delicate thing life holds. Friendship at its deepest, another rare flower, seldom reveals itself unless it is certain of response, appreciation, and reciprocation from the other person. To do so would be to desecrate one of life's glorious gifts. There must be an attunement of life with life before there can be true friendship. So it is with anything noble or good or beautiful.

Have you ever stood before a great painting and heard a stupid tourist make a disparaging remark about one of the world's masterpieces? To the person with a sense for the beautiful it seems that the painting should have been screened from those who could not appreciate it. Likewise, when one sees a child in a circle of cursing men, one feels that the child should be screened from coarseness which will not understand or respect his fineness. So it is supremely with truth. Truth is possessed of an instinctive reticence which is laid aside only for those whose lives are attuned to it, those who "have eyes to see."

However, there is more in it than that. While truth is a thing of beauty and screens itself from those who cannot or will not appreciate it, it has a characteristic even more

basic and distinctive. Every bit of it, wherever you meet it, is charged with moral meaning and moral implications, implications for the conduct of your own life. Truth is not something to be observed and enjoyed; it is something to be seen and acted upon. If you should discover that it is true that the pure in heart see God, there falls on you an immediate obligation to seek to make your life pure. If you should discover that this world of ours can go forward only through the willingness of men to lose their lives for it, there falls on you an immediate obligation to throw your life wholly into that great task. No glimpse of truth without a corresponding implication for life! And the corollary of this is obvious. No one discovers truth in its fullness unless he pledges himself to remold his whole life in accordance with the truth discovered.[5] Moreover, he must pledge himself in advance.

But one's attitude must go even farther. Not only willingness to meet the implications of the truth discovered, but determination, eagerness so to remold life. Not only moral honesty but *moral earnestness*—an eagerness to throw one's whole life wherever truth points, at whatever sacrifice of old habits and deep prejudices and long-cherished plans, at whatever cost to oneself and family and career. One of the noblest and wittiest Christians I have known used to say with regard to his call to the ministry that when he was in college he expected God to come across the Princeton campus and, standing beneath his window, yell up, "John McDowell, stick your head out. I want you to go into the Christian ministry." Small wonder the call never came. That is the way many of us face the decision of our lifework. And thus do many of us face truth. Moral earnestness is the inescapable condition for

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[5] "It is probably impossible to reason an intellectually alert but morally frivolous man into belief in God." A. E. Taylor, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 31, p. 98.

discovering truth, as it is for the true living of life.[6] "He who *wills* to do God's will shall know." [7]

So the laying hold of the truth about life is fully as much a matter of moral attunement as of intellectual perception; it is the moral harmonizing of life with the life of God himself. How could it be otherwise? If it be true that through this vast fabric of human life there runs a thread of purpose which gives to everything else its meaning, then only those who share that purpose can possibly understand life's meaning. If there stands at the very center of the universe a God of love, then only those who see life through the eyes of love and in the spirit of love can possibly see it aright. As surely as the wave length of the radio must be properly adjusted to the message to be received, so only he whose heart beats in unison with God's can be sure of the heartbeat of the Great Companion. People without moral purpose or sense of moral responsibility often say, "I don't know God." "Heavens, man, how could you? You never really know me as a friend unless you share my purposes. How much more true of God!" It is in the normal flow of life's central current that the truth we seek is to be exercised. It is there largely that it is to be found. Just here, intellectual speculation betrays us. We like to draw apart from the stream of life, sit meditatively on its bank, observe its swift current and then theorize about it. We defeat our own purpose. We can study life that way, but we cannot understand it. The fact that life is in ceaseless flow means that there is only one place from which we can sense it truly, from the center of its current.

Life is a moral challenge—a challenge to be done once and for all with petty shams and petty prides, with intellectual egotism and social extravagance and moral indif-

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[6] On this, see more below, Chapter Four and Chapter Six.

[7] John 7:17. Cf. Rousseau, "My son, keep your spirit always in such a state as to desire that there be a God, and you will never doubt it."

ference—a challenge to see life as a great struggle, and to resolve to spend and be spent in that struggle; a struggle that men and women and little children shall find life, and that what we call the kingdom of God on earth may come. To those who accept that challenge, truth and God are increasingly revealed.

CHAPTER THREE

The Author of Life—God

OUR PURPOSE IS THE QUEST for the meaning of life. We recognize that there are certain conditions to be met by the truth seeker before his undertaking can be successfully pursued. Now, let us assume that we have honestly fulfilled to the best of our ability the conditions for the quest of life's meaning. Where shall we begin our inquiry?

Here, there can be little serious question. We must begin with the facts of the world in which we live.

For what is our situation in this great enterprise of understanding the meaning of life? We stand, all of us, whenever common sense guides our minds to sane humility, face to face with a mighty, majestic, mysterious Other-than-ourselves, whose dimensions we may never begin to measure accurately, whose precise nature and purposes we can never hope to comprehend fully. As Professor William Morgan once wrote:

> We are held in the grip of a stupendous reality which every moment of our lives affects us for good or ill, forwarding or frustrating our hopes and plans. That is no hypothesis and no matter of faith but a self-evident fact which we cannot escape.

That recognition is the beginning of all knowledge as of all true religion. Only a first beginning, to be sure. But it

is well that, at the outset, it be firmly implanted in our minds. We shall never wholly escape it.

The primary factor in human life is not a man's own consciousness. It is not his social relationships to his fellow men. The primary factor has ever been and ever will be the universe which determines the conditions for the existence of life, both personal and corporate, and which sustains it moment by moment. Each of us is born into a world which in a vital sense is our ancestor, out of whose inanimate structures has come animal life, out of whose animate life has come human life; a world which supported us (both as individuals and as a race) during the tedious period before birth and which made our birth possible; a world whose silent but dependable orderliness alone makes our present life possible; a world to which we owe our existence and upon which we are dependent at every second for our continuance. Countless millenniums before man was prefigured in the amoeba, the universe was living out its old age; countless millenniums after the dust has cleared from man's brief scurry on this planet, the universe will be in the heyday of its early youth. This is simply a graphic way of saying that, in comparison with the universe in which he finds himself, man is as nothing.

Any view of life which would make pretense of being intelligent must start its inquiry here and nowhere else—with the question of the universe. Whence comes it? Whither goes it? What meaning, if any, can be found in it? Beside these queries, the questions of man's existence, his destiny, his petty problems in this year of grace fade into insignificance. If only we had perspective to see it so, the great question for the human mind is not, "What think ye of man?" It is, "What think ye of this vast and mysterious colossus of which man is the creature, and an inconceivably insignificant creature at that?" A philosophy without an answer to these deeper questions is like an at-

tempt to throw a bridge across a river without laying a base on either bank. If we must be agnostic here, then we must be agnostic throughout. If the primary fact of life reveals no meaning, then how shall we find meaning in all the rest reared on that fact?

When we examine this universe of ours, what can we say about it? It manifests three fundamental characteristics:[1]

1. *Inconceivable magnitude.* The astronomers tell us that if a train were to travel continuously at the rate of a mile a minute into space, in 40,000,000 years it would reach the *nearest* star. But the Palomar telescope has recently discovered a galaxy of stars at such a distance that light traveling at 186,000 miles a second takes at least *one billion* years to reach our earth. That is to say, the distance of the galaxy is approximately as follows:

186,000 x 60 x 60 x 24 x 365 x 1,000,000,000, or
5,865,696,000,000,000,000,000 miles
(5 septillion, 865 sextillion, 696 quintillion miles)

And the number of galaxies (not individual stars but Milky Ways) within that range of vision is in the neighborhood of *one billion!* That is not the limit of the universe, of course. On the contrary, that is only the hither fringes of the universe. It is simply the outmost distance which telescopes have yet penetrated. It is believed that the total number of such galaxies, each a system of hundreds of millions of stars, may well be 200,000,000,000 —one for every human being who has ever lived.[2] That is the universe in which we live. Inconceivable magnitude, first. What do you make of it?

2. *Incredible complexity.* The vastness of the universe is only one side of the picture. Corresponding to the world

[1] For the suggestion of this threefold description of the nature of the universe, I am indebted to Professor Henry Norris Russell of Princeton University.

[2] Information from *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin,* December 29, 1950.

of the telescope is the world of the microscope. It is said that when a snowflake falls on a warm pavement and melts, more molecular changes take place in that instant than all the movements of all the troops in all the armies in the World Wars. We are told that in a single common steel pin there are so many electrons in incessant motion that the human race in a million years could not count them; yet in comparison with their size they are as far apart as the planets of the solar system. That is our universe; what do you make of it? Incredible complexity, second.

3. *Absolute orderliness.* At the time of a solar eclipse some years ago, the moon was a fraction of a minute late in crossing the sun. It troubled the astronomers greatly, not because the moon was late (for the moon is always late), but because the reason for its tardiness had not yet been discovered. It was no exception to the orderliness of the universe, but simply a gap in our knowledge of that orderliness. We were told in advance the precise moment to a fraction of a second and the precise spot to the fraction of an inch on the sidewalks of New York City where the shadow of the total eclipse would fall; and at the precise moment and the precise spot, the shadow fell. To be sure, the current vogue of *popular* scientific interpretation stresses the element of *indeterminism* in the universe. Through most of the last century, in deference to the dogma of mechanism, men were supposed to believe that everything which happened even to the most intricate ruminations of their own intellects or the most subtle responses of their imaginations was rigidly determined—an assumption in theory which they belied in practice by almost every action they took. Today we are supposed to believe that everything which happens even to the daily rising of the sun or the solidity of a steel girder is undetermined—an assumption in theory which we belie in practice by every plan we make for next year or for the next mo-

ment. The fact is that, whatever be the indeterminism *within* the atom, it does not affect in the tiniest degree the absolute dependability either of the stars in their courses or of the chronology of tomorrow. It is possible to predict now with infinitesimal exactitude the time when a certain comet will reappear within the earth's vision thousands of years hence. Were it possible for us to return to the earth on the appointed day, we may be sure the comet would reappear on schedule. Absolute orderliness, third.

That is the universe in which we live. What do you make of it? Shall we say that behind it there is nothing? Well, there is nothing else with which our human minds are familiar that presents these same characteristics of *size, complexity, orderliness* and that does not have behind itself—mind. Logically there can be only one answer as to what lies behind this vast first fact of experience which so pre-eminently is characterized by size, complexity, order —and that is *mind.* The story is told of an inventor who, although himself a believer in God, belonged to a circle of agnostic scientists. He had perfected a marvelous and intricate invention. He invited his friends to dinner to show them his new toy. As dinner was announced, the curtains into the dining room were drawn and on the center of the table was seen the new mechanism, overwhelming in its complexity, moving in bewildering revolutions and convolutions with no apparent source of locomotion. For a moment the guests stood agape, and then one of them, one of the most blatantly agnostic as it happened, gasped, "Who made it?" And the inventor with a smile replied, "Chance!" It is far more logical to suppose that the highest product of man's inventive genius is the result of chance than to suppose that the universe is anything other than the product of Infinite Mind.

Much is still made of the supposed conflict between science and religion. It is the sheer facts of modern science

that have driven many of us to belief in God. We are rapidly entering into the day when the strongest *intellectual* support for belief in God is to be found through science. As Professor Kirtley Mather of Harvard said many years ago in a *Forum* magazine article:

> That there is an Administration of the universe cannot be denied. Something has determined and continues to determine the functioning of natural law, the orderly transformations of matter and energy. . . . From one point of view, the question "Is there a God?" is promptly and finally answered in the affirmative.

It is an old but sound saying, "The astronomer who is an atheist is mad." If modern science has done one thing, it has re-echoed with multiplied meaning the psalmists' words, "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork. . . . When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained, what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?"

II

Many, I know, will consider this an undue emphasis upon physical nature, upon the universe, upon cosmology. I do not think so. The point of it is not primarily to establish the fact of God (though I believe it does that) but rather to put in proper proportion man's place in the universe and the significance of his problems. It should bring three invaluable gifts:

1. The first is the gift of *certainty,* of *steadiness* in our faith. The recognition of God as the Ultimate Power behind the universe rests on evidence which is completely objective, independent of what we happen to feel at any particular moment, or as Josiah Royce once said, "some external truth, some reality that lacks our weakness, that

is victorious though we fail." Precisely such evidence we need to keep our faith steady, secure from changing moods.

This has been the view of the Plain Man in every age. It was perhaps the most learned scholar of the English-speaking world in our time who suggested that if the question, "What are you most certain of?" were put to the Man on the Street (or, better, to the Man on the Farm, since he lives closer to nature and therefore to reality), after a moment for reflection, he would be likely to reply, "Well, of three things at least. Behind this universe, there is an Ultimate Power, God. There is a difference between right and wrong. The right deserves the absolute devotion of my life." The first conviction is the spontaneous assumption of the Plain Man: "Whatever more may be true, at least this is certain: *behind this universe, there is an Ultimate Power, God.*"

I recall coming to the end of my sophomore year at college in that state of mind which was then supposed to characterize all sophomores but is nowadays just as likely to be found among high school seniors—complete uncertainty, not knowing what I believed, only knowing that I disbelieved far more than I believed and was therefore unwilling to affirm any belief, certain of only one thing—that I was certain of nothing, a full-fledged agnostic. In that frame of mind, I chanced to go for summer holiday to a camp for boys from the city tenements run by the undergraduates of my university. One evening, after the boys had been put to bed at the end of a strenuous day, the counselors stretched out in relaxed silence along the high bank above the lakeside where the camp was located. It was a brilliant, cloudless night. Stars glittered by the billions in a perfectly clear sky. As we lay there in the cool stillness with the waves lapping at the shore, my eyes chanced to roam across the heavens. I had never studied astronomy. I had only the ordinary layman's understanding of the immensities and intricacies and or-

der there revealed. Gradually there came across my consciousness some such thought as this: "You insignificant little puppy. *That* is the universe in which your lot is cast, and you declare arrogantly, 'There is no God!' "

There was nothing remarkable about that happening. There was no emotional exaltation either at the time or afterward. It left no aftermath of elation or reaction. It seemed to me then just a sensible recognition of inescapable fact prompted by a realistic glimpse of the heavens and aided by the quiet and relaxation of the moment. It was, as nearly as I have ever known one, a purely *intellectual realization.* But I believe it was a *sound* realization. And I think it can truthfully be added that, in the years since, there has never been a moment when my mind was quiet and my spirit poised at which I have been able to question the soundness of that recognition: behind this universe, there *must* be an Ultimate Power, God.

2. A second gift is *perspective.* This approach sets our seeking and inquiring minds in right relation to the Reality we yearn to fathom. And perspective, if not itself the bestower of truth, is the absolute prerequisite, part of the indispensable equipment without which truth cannot be discovered. Perspective has close kinship with sense of humor. And sense of humor is one of the authentic pathways to truth and to God, though it has been pretty generally neglected by heavy-witted philosophers and theologians and the pious generally, except such shrewd and joyous saints as Francis and even Jesus himself.[3] And when perspective has restored our sense of humor, we are likely to surmise that something very much like a sense of humor must be a quality of the Divine Mind also. I recall the remark of a brilliant but supercilious student in one of our foremost women's colleges: "All that you say

[3] On Jesus' use of humor to drive home truth, see T. R. Glover, *The Jesus of History* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), Ch. III.

about religion would be true if only one were able to believe in a personal God. But, of course, *I* can't believe in a personal God." One suspects that he in whose hand the universes describe their courses without effort must experience no little amusement at the "imperceptible minutia on an infinitesimal dust spot in a far-off corner of an ocean of space" who offers herself as master of it all.

An unknown author once wrote these lines:

> When they have proved that man is wholly clay
> And God a dream—listen, and far away
> From far beyond the utmost star whose light,
> Dark in the Distance, shines still out of sight,
> You shall hear gentle laughter, soft as tears,
> Such as wells up from human love that hears
> And watches, understandingly beguiled,
> The simple, brave complacence of a child.

3. A third gift which must follow is *humility*. And, as part of humility, a certain insistent tentativeness in our own conclusions and a certain tolerance toward the views of others.

This is not the humility of a pious superstition but the humility of a comprehensive and intelligent view of the universe in which we live. Nothing but the most consummate and childish egotism has led us to suppose that man is the center of creation and to consider the universe anthropocentric.[4] We shall not get far until we come to that realization. Humility, likewise, is a prerequisite for the reception of truth.

III

We have elected to make our start at one pole of man's knowledge of God—the universe. And we have argued

[4] This is not in conflict with the important recognition that man *is* the highest creature in that part of the universe of which we have intimate knowledge. See point 5 on page 57.

that the universe does point to the *fact* of God. It tells us that behind the Creation of which we ourselves are the creatures, there can be one thing and one thing only—Infinite Mind.

But we have insisted that this is only a starting point. And, while it proves the fact of God, it does not tell us what we most want to know about him—the nature and character and purpose of that Mind. Is it a vast cold Reason, impersonal, indifferent? Or is it, as some men have said, cruel, malicious, vindictive, making of man and all his efforts a sport and plaything, allowing him the semblance of freedom in order to tantalize him all the more when he discovers that his freedom is an illusion? Or is it a great, impenetrable Power which is working for good but is hidden from us behind his majesty and transcendence—like the head of a great corporation secluded behind row on row of private secretaries? Or is he, perchance, what Jesus thought him to be—One whom we describe best when we call him Father, closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet, One who is ever more ready to hear than we to pray? For most of us just here is the greatest difficulty in our thought of God—not to believe that he is, but to be assured that he knows and cares.

Let us be clear at once that our difficulty is not one of reason, of the logic of the matter. Quite the reverse. To be sure, it has never been easy to believe that the Power in whose hands the cosmos revolves can be interested in and give attention to the private concerns and hopes, the perplexities and needs of Tom, Dick, and Harry. It has never been easy to form the thought of One whose mighty sway holds the stars in their courses and yet who marks the comings and goings, the fears and frustrations of every one of his creatures, who can hear and cares to hear the petty prayer of each human life—far more, who will enter into personal and peculiar friendship with that life. For

men and women in our day, this difficulty is only slightly, if at all, greater than it was for the ancient Greeks and Hebrews. But for us, as for them, the difficulty does not arise out of logical improbability. On the contrary, a moment's quiet thought recognizes that it is incredible that a Power so mighty, an Intelligence so vast should *not* be fully aware of and solicitous for each of the sons of men. *If there be a God at all,* it must be true that he is, quite literally, "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet," One from whose solicitous concern there need be no parting, One from whose enveloping care there can be no escape. That is the only logical, the only sensible belief. The Sustainer of the cosmos must be One who also numbers the hairs on each head. No, the fault that we ever doubt God's knowledge and concern is not in the logic of the matter. It lies in the feebleness of our imaginations and the meagerness of our faith. As Dr. Fosdick has said, "Not strong reason but weak imagination leads us to be terrified by the mere size of the universe into the thought that God cannot care for us. So far as physical Nature has any testimony to bear on the matter at all, she says, 'There is nothing too small for him to attend to.' " [5] Augustine's word is still the wisest, "He loves us all as though we were but one; *but* he loves each one as though he loved him alone."

IV

But what evidence have we that the God of the universe is also the God and Father of Jesus Christ, the Personal Being Christians have always believed him to be, the Person Jesus believed in? What can we learn concerning the nature of God?

Here again we turn first of all to Nature herself. We

[5] *The Meaning of Prayer* (New York: Association Press, 1915), p. 52.

have not told all that the universe teaches us. As a matter of fact, we have referred to only some of the aspects of the universe which are familiar to us in ordinary experience—those to be noted in physical Nature. We have thought of the universe as static. But the world as we know it is not static. It is dynamic; it is continuously changing under our eyes. Moreover, that part of the universe which we confront on this planet has given birth to a gradually but steadily advancing world process which we call evolution. The story of our world is the history of slow but certain movement upward. Indeed, I think we may say that the one controlling conception which has emerged from the vast labors of recent workers in both science and philosophy and which seems to claim the support of virtually all of them is the conception of an ascending series or scale of levels or strata of reality, and of an age-long process of advance, from level to level, upward.

Moreover, those who have studied it most closely and can interpret it most authoritatively tell us that this process cannot be thought of in the figure of an unbroken inclined plane, as though evolution had somehow boarded a cosmic escalator and was being automatically wafted upward. Rather, it must be thought of in the figure of a flight of stairs. Higher and higher types of being have, one after another, made their appearance—first of all, inanimate matter; then, life; next, mind; and, finally and climactically, what the philosophers of evolution usually refer to as "spirit." William Temple once summarized this conclusion thus:

> According to this view—and I think it is almost universally held, though the phrasing would vary from one exponent to another—reality exists in a series of strata of which it is sufficient to indicate the stages of matter, life, mind, and spirit. These are related to one another in such a way that the lower is necessary to the higher, but only fulfills its own destiny

when the higher comes upon it and utilizes it, or, in the old phrase, "informs" it.[6]

This level of "spirit" is reached in intelligent human beings who are no longer bent upon self-preservation, self-interest, self-gratification and self-advance, but who recognize and respond to beauty and truth and goodness and holiness and love, and give themselves unreservedly and wholly to those great and good things which we call "values."

The universe as far as we can apprehend it, then, is a vast organic whole, made up of interrelated and interdependent types or levels of reality. As we seek to explain how it came to be so, we note further that the world as we know it today is the outcome of an age-long process through which the higher types of reality have emerged from the lower types, continue to rest upon the lower and more elementary types, and yet rise above those lower types and utilize them for their own needs and purposes. Several features of this process are especially important:

1. Behind and beneath the process as a whole and every stage in it, more fundamental (that is, "primordial") than even the material universe, is an *invisible* and *intangible* "structure" or "pattern" of laws or principles without which no world at all would ever have been possible, or would be possible today. To take the simplest and most familiar illustration, when two atoms of a gas, hydrogen, unite with one atom of another gas, oxygen, to make a molecule of a liquid, water, they do so because a basic law of physical nature exists which is neither a gas nor a liquid nor indeed material at all, which rules that when

[6] *The Centrality of Christ* (Milwaukee: Morehouse-Gorham Company, 1936), p. 64. For much fuller and more scholarly expositions by Temple, see his *Nature, Man, and God* and *Christ the Truth: an essay* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934 and 1924, respectively).

hydrogen in a certain proportion and oxygen in another proportion are brought together under certain circumstances, a drop of water will result. An unfathomable "system" of such laws, all of them wholly immaterial, invisible, unchanging, makes possible our physical world in its inconceivable complexity, incessant change and absolute orderliness. In somewhat the same fashion, apparently there is a "law of reality" that, when particles of matter should come together in certain complicated proportions and under certain conditions, a new type of reality which is very different from mere matter, namely *life,* should "emerge" or appear. And so on, with each higher stage in the history of evolution. It is, again, such a "system" of utterly intangible and unaltering principles or laws governing the behavior of all things from the electron to man which makes possible the continuance of any instance of reality, and of all of them in their incredibly vast and complex interrelatedness, at any moment of time. This is the ultimate "structure" of reality.

2. In the evolutionary development itself, there can be noted an urge or drive (often called "nisus") toward the production or emergence of higher and ever higher types of reality. Although this "nisus" operates "within" the process, and therefore may be called "immanent," it cannot be adequately explained in terms of the different constituents of the process itself. No one supposes that, at some particular moment in time, a vast number of diverse material atoms got together, held a town meeting and resolved, "Go to; let us give birth to life!" No one supposes that, at some later stage, a large aggregation of life cells assembled in town meeting and declared, "Let us give birth to mind." In other words, although the drive functions within the process, it cannot be accounted for by factors which are of the "stuff" of the process, but only by forces or purposes which "transcend" the process itself.

In brief, the immanent "nisus" reveals a transcendent Power determining it.

3. As already noted, the higher types of reality emerge from the lower, and yet cannot be accounted for merely in terms of the lower; indeed, they could never even have been foreseen in the perspective of the lower. It looks as though the higher types of reality in some sense fulfill the real meaning or purpose of the lower. In any event, the higher utilize the lower for their own ends or purposes; animals use matter for their biological needs; men use both matter and lower life for their higher needs made possible by their possession of "mind"; the great spirits use matter (food) and life (their bodies) and mind for the highest purposes of all—the creation of beauty, the discovery of truth, the glory of worship, the fulfillment of love.

4. While the process as a whole clearly moves in a certain direction, and that direction is upward, advance is not automatic; at the higher levels especially, advance upward depends upon the co-operation of the immanent nisus which represents the true destiny of the process *and* the response to that nisus by the various individuals or species which make up the stuff of the process. This is the meaning of freedom. At the animal level, this co-operative response may be unconscious; it is nevertheless essential for survival. It is the testimony of the scientist: those individuals or species which will not respond to the call upward are cast aside, decline and die, while the main movement of advance sweeps over them or around them or past them, and presses forward; witness the dinosaurs and their ilk.

At the human level, however, co-operation must be conscious and deliberate; freedom here is greater and more determinative of cosmic advance. This law applies to individuals, to generations, to societies, to nations, to spe-

cies. "The wages of sin *is* death." Speaking to students upon this most unpopular of all texts, one of our most popular college preachers is fond of chiding them that they do not believe it true because they have never dared to put it to a sufficiently thoroughgoing test. "Come on, now," he will say. "Stop being dilettante in your sins. Sin! Really *sin!* SIN—imaginatively, unrestrainedly, undiscourageably! Before long, you will find yourself in a box six feet long by three feet wide by two feet high." To prove the text true, one needs only to sin with sufficient originality, abandon, and dogged determination. This *law of reality* is part of what religion means by divine judgment.

So, likewise, with nations. It is evident that the principle of advance which should govern relations of peoples is one of justice and co-operation. Those empires which would not recognize it and conform to it have gone down the well-worn path to decay—Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Rome. In our day, the perfectly obvious principle of survival and advance is world collaboration. History is waiting to see whether there is to be added one more to its long list of dead civilizations. The answer will be determined not by alteration in the structure of reality, but by conformity to or defiance of the clear mandate of that structure by our civilization. Just as a too flagrant disregard of the laws of health brings its inescapable penalty in sickness or death, so any community or generation or nation which flouts the laws of social well-being and progress too persistently or too boldly does so to its own destruction. The fate of one after another of the great empires, the disintegration and disappearance of one civilization after another, is history's stern testimony to this law of reality.

But we have pointed to only the negative aspect of this truth: the reality of divine judgment. There is a positive counterpart. The higher man rises in evolutionary ad-

vance, the more vital and decisive becomes the factor of human initiative and response. Our world is a creative process, and the Power behind it must be thought of as the Creator. But—here is one of its greatest glories—it is a creative process in which the task of creation is increasingly shared by the Creator with the creatures of his creation. We have said that it reaches its apex, thus far, at the level of "spirit," that is, in "intelligent human beings who are no longer bent upon self-preservation, self-gratification, self-interest, self-advance, but who recognize and respond to beauty and truth and goodness and holiness and love, and *give themselves* unreservedly and wholly to those great and good things which we call 'values.' " But, it is perfectly clear that none of those "great and good things"—or their concrete expressions in art, poetry, invention, philosophy, homes, character, affection, loyalty, sacrifice, selfless devotion—can be brought into being by God alone. They are possible only as men voluntarily become fellow creators. The Divine Creator, through the processes of an implacable judgment, can do away with those who will not respond to his good purpose for them and their race, and thus he can prevent them from ruining the long-range advance; and he does in fact do just that. But he cannot, or rather will not, in the same fashion impose a higher life upon men and nations. God can punish the sinner; he cannot create the saint, except as he who is to be made saint responds with the voluntary dedication of his whole being to the call and claim of the highest upon him. Advance in the cosmic process is marked by increasing self-limitation on the part of the Creator, as increasing freedom and self-determination are given to the creatures.[7]

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[7] This will be thought to involve a denial of God's omnipotence. But only if we hold a crude and utterly unworthy idea of omnipotence. Omnipotence, when we are thinking of God, does not mean sheer arbitrary force, employed without regard to the means used and the values im-

All the evidence we possess, then, indicates that God has created an age-long evolutionary process, the *final culmination* of which has been made dependent upon the wisdom, courage, and devotion of mortal men. Indeed, we may say that the further advance of that part of the Divine Purpose which is at work upon this planet is awaiting the voluntary co-operation of mankind. We are not unfamiliar with an analogy in our human experience. Does not this suggest a father, begetting and rearing children, initiating great enterprises and projecting high purposes, and then entrusting the fulfillment of his plans to the response and collaboration of his children? Could there be a more challenging indication of the significance of human freedom? Or a more compelling interpretation of our human destiny?

5. And last, this cosmic process which is continuous from the simplest items of matter to the noblest manifestations of spirit reaches its culmination in man; man *is* the summit of that part of creation of which we have intimate knowledge [8]—*not* man as such, all men, mankind, however, for evolution has already gone beyond that. The cosmic process reaches its climax, thus far, in *a certain type of man*—not the most brilliantly intellectual man or the shrewdest schemer or the most powerful leader. The climax is found in persons who recognize most fully and respond most completely to those great and good things which we call values.

But in any continuous organic process, the purpose of the whole is to be discovered in the end to which it leads. At the top rather than at the bottom or somewhere along the ascent, in the highest rather than in the lower elements of it, through its culmination rather than through

periled. Omnipotence means power fully adequate to accomplish the Divine Purpose. The concept of power must always be brought into subservience to the higher concept of purpose.

[8] See above, p. 48.

its origins, is to be found the clearest light upon the Power behind it all. The highest level within our ken is that of free, responsible, spiritual persons, accepting the claim of the true, the beautiful, the good, the holy, and giving unstinting loyalty to them. Man stands at the summit of our region of creation. And he who stands on the apex of that summit, proving not only the true destiny of mankind's life but also the true meaning of the whole creation, is he who surrenders himself utterly to the purpose which pervades it all, making it the Ruler of his devotion. That is why "the saint is the soundest theologian." Here, then, in such men—and supremely, in the noblest of all our humanity—is the clearest, most authoritative disclosure of the Power behind it all. If the whole creation "groans and travails" to produce him, if he is that "far-off, divine event" toward which the whole creation moves, then in him and through him we discern the Sovereign of Creation. To see him is to see that Sovereign. And when, in fact, we look upon him, we see his Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V

Where, then, do we find God? And what have we learned about him?

1. We find evidence of God, first of all, in that which is prior to our world itself and without which there could not be, and never could have been, a world at all—in the primordial, underlying, and unchanging laws or principles which make a *universe* possible, the structure which gives to the world its order, its dependability, its rationality, and its possibilities of evolutionary advance. God is their Author and Sustainer.

2. We find evidence of God, also, in the force or drive which appears to be pushing or pulling creation onward

and upward toward ever higher and more significant types of reality. This "nisus" is a disclosure of God's purpose for *our* world.[9] It points to a Cosmic Power, purposing good, Creator of an advancing world process which has found its present culmination in man-at-his-highest, in free, responsible, moral beings whom God invites to join with him in the further fulfillment of his creative purposes.

3. But we find God, most clearly and most significantly, in the climax of his creation; and, above all, in One who more fully than any other has discerned his good purpose for mankind and has made that purpose his own, uniting his life wholly with the Life of God himself. Thus, an examination of the evidence presented to us by our world, making its beginning in its most obvious material aspects of size and complexity and order, finally brings our attention to focus upon the fact of Jesus Christ.

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[9] God may well have other and quite different purposes for other parts of his creation.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Master of Life—Jesus

"RELIGION, YES; BUT WHY Christianity?" "God, yes; but why Jesus?" These queries represent the attitude of vast numbers of people, and not only young people, toward religion. "Why Jesus? Why Christianity?"

In this chapter, I am going to attempt to give a direct, but by no means exhaustive, answer to those questions. And I am going to offer no apology for making the answer very personal.

In the preceding chapter, when we were considering the question of God, we were dealing almost wholly with evidence which is thoroughly objective, not at all dependent upon the personal experience or mood of the individual—evidence which, if it be valid, should be recognized as such by any honest and competent and earnest inquirer. And, we saw at the end how that strictly objective evidence unexpectedly brings our attention to focus upon Jesus. That is impersonal testimony to his significance for a philosophy of reality as well as for one's philosophy of life. But now, we are going to make a sudden shift in our thinking. We are going to ask, not "What does the universe or history or philosophy have to tell me about Jesus?" but "What can the author of this book tell me from his own personal conviction? What evidence is

there which I can confirm from my own experience?" Indeed, I shall try to show that that is the kind of evidence regarding the significance of Jesus which interests us most, and why that should be so.

In the first place, it is obvious that that is the fashion in which people first began to think about Jesus seriously at all. There are two distinct aspects to the place which Christ may hold in anyone's life. The first is our *experience* of Christ's meaning for us, what influence actually and vitally he exerts over us, what would be missing from life if he were removed. The second is our *interpretation* of that experience, our intellectual theories about him deduced from that experience. The Church has always tended to confuse the true sequence; out of that mistake have come many of its theological controversies through the centuries. It has tried to make people believe certain doctrines *about* Jesus in the hope that this would induce in them certain experiences *of* Jesus. We must not dismiss that sequence in the presentation of Jesus too casually, for that is in fact the sequence by which the Early Church won most of its adherents. The first evangelists thundered incredible, seemingly irrational claims about the miracle of Christ's life and his resurrection; it was these preposterous assertions of fact which overwhelmed people's critical doubts and brought them within the Christian fellowship. Only then did they begin to learn "who it was in whom they believed." That has been a successful missionary method always, and is today.

Nevertheless, the reverse is the truer and sounder order. As Dr. A. B. Davidson liked to point out, behind theology there lies religion, and behind religion there lies a personal experience. This is the order which Jesus would have us take, for it was ever his method to point men to his life and his work and from these, from the meaning which he was coming to have in their lives, to allow them

to formulate their own theories about him. So it was when John the Baptist sent some of his followers to ask whether Jesus really was the long-expected saviour of the Jewish people. "Tell John what you have seen and heard; the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the good news is being preached" (Luke 7:22). Nothing more. This was the order with the first disciples.

Be clear in your own mind where these troublesome theories *about* Jesus came from. The earliest Christians knew Jesus, he came to mean certain things to them in their lives, and from these experiences they were driven to certain deductions regarding him which we call doctrines. For example, the doctrine of the divinity of Christ did not arise out of speculation but out of life. Indeed, it is not primarily a philosophical formulation but an attempt to give adequate intellectual expression to a tremendous experience. That is the way we got all the dogmas which confuse and trouble us so today; originally they were primarily interpretations of what had happened in the inner lives of human beings. If theories about Jesus are to have significant meaning for us today, it will be because we have come to them in the same way, because our experience of what Jesus means to us has driven us to them. If the Jesus of the Gospels, freed within the limits of possibility of all preconceived notions of his person, does not make on the open mind of the earnest searcher for God an impression of divinity, then no theory or argument we can devise can convince him. If the Jesus of the Gospels *does* make that impression, criticism can do little to destroy it permanently.

If it is true that it is each man's experience of Jesus which is alone significant, then it is that experience, as it has come to me very fragmentarily and incompletely, which you will wish me to give.

II

But there is an initial and almost insuperable obstacle. Most of us simply do not have sufficient elementary information about Jesus, to which the testimony from someone else's experience could attempt to make its case.

In my undergraduate years, I had two friends who were a bewilderment to me and for whom I am sure I was a source of never-failing exasperation. One was a devotee of Browning. I can still recall strained half-hours when he would wax eloquent on the meaning and beauty of "Saul," "The Pope's Speech," "Paracelsus," "The Last Ride Together," and the pained expression of his face as his eloquence fell on dull and unresponsive ears. For I then knew nothing of Browning. Some years later, I took a volume of Browning in my suitcase as the principal companion on a summer vacation; I became a full sharer of my friend's enthusiasm.

The other friend was a great lover of beauty and especially of the expression of beauty through architecture. The memory is still vivid of many an evening when he labored to make real to me the glories of Chartres and to bring me into something of his own feeling for great art. Finally in despair he surrendered the task to the angels. Then, one summer I visited Chartres; now I know what he meant. But I can remember as though it were yesterday the hopelessness in the faces of those two friends.

I always experience a bit of that hopelessness in trying to talk to others about Jesus. How can one possibly make Jesus vivid to a person who has not already known him? But it is precisely because he is unknown that one wants to speak about him. That is our baffling dilemma about Jesus. None can appreciate his significance unless he has taken the time and made the effort to come to understand Jesus for himself. But in our day few are likely to think that that time and effort are justified unless Jesus already

has some significance for them. All one can do is try to tell simply something of Jesus' meaning for him, in the hope that the flame of his enthusiasm may here and there strike fire and lure another to fuller personal exploration.

In the first place, one *must* see Jesus against the background of his own day and in the setting of the distinctive circumstances of his own life. This is essential; one must approach him as one would any other historical personality. You will need to note the kind of world it was into which Jesus came—how men were living, what they were thinking, what events were transpiring, what men were seeking, even what they were eating and wearing. You must understand a bit about the geography of Jesus' homeland—the rugged beauty of its scenery, the devastating heat of its desert winds, the foul odor of its small-town streets—an insignificant minor dependency in the vastness of the Roman Empire, but, by the accidents of history, the battleground of the world's armies, the focal point of the world's culture, the hub of the world's trade, the cat's-paw of the world's politics. You will need to catch something of the atmosphere of Jesus' personal background—a village whose casual life furnished abundant material for alert insight—a poor but respectable widow's home in a typical rural town, with its "poor houses, bad smells and worse stories," children squabbling at their games in the market place, overpatched clothes and overused wineskins, the familiar village figures of the unjust judge, the unfortunate widow, the undisciplined son. And a carpenter shop where good work was toilsomely finished. Most important of all, the student of Jesus must achieve some grasp of the issues of the time—the immediate political and social problems against which the drama of his life was set, in relation to which a large part of his teaching was formulated, and which conspired to drive him to a premature end. For the circumstances of Jesus' life were formed for him by forces over which he had no control,

the immediate contemporary situation. He came into a land and among a people bitter with the disgrace of a foreign and pagan conqueror, seething with feverish anticipation of supernatural release or violent insurrection, ripe for revolution. It was to such a time that Jesus spoke his convictions, and under the play of such forces that he lived out his career.[1]

Lastly, the student of Jesus should possess a vivid grasp of the drama of that career—its early success marked by vast followings, unbridled enthusiasm, uncritical adulation; then the gradual rise of official opposition, the parallel waning of popular acclaim; the intensification of conflict between Jesus and the leaders of government and synagogue; the final drawing of the issues; the betrayal and the execution. A swift drama, it was, a career which achieved its zenith in a few months, its crisis shortly after, and its end in less than three years. Such was the movement of Jesus' life.

III

What, then, is the meaning which Jesus may hold for you and me today?

That meaning may be found mainly at three points—in the *convictions of his mind,* in the *drama of his life,* in the *central temper of his spirit.* This is the way I should be inclined to put it:

1. *The controlling convictions of Jesus' mind were true;* and they are the most important convictions for all human living in all times.

[1] The best very brief summary of the immediate historical background and setting of Jesus' life which I know is the "Introduction" to T. W. Manson's *The Beginning of the Gospel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950). It leads on to an adequately annotated version of Mark's Gospel, supplemented by additional material from the other Gospels. Thus, it serves the reader as an admirable "Preface" to an understanding of Jesus.

2. The forces which gathered around Jesus' life, which determined his career, and which finally brought him to an end of disgrace and failure are the most powerful forces in the life of society in every age; and *Jesus' way of meeting and mastering those forces is the one effective way.*
3. *The central temper of Jesus' spirit, his faith*—deeper than convictions of the mind or acts of the life—*was the noblest and truest possible for a human being;* such faith is the secret of all highest living, always.

It will be seen that the first and second of these "meanings" correspond very closely to the two fundamental needs with which men come to religion, seeking light for the interpretation of life and guidance and power for the living of life. The third "meaning" embraces both of the others, and is the real answer to both of the other needs.

IV

Jesus is, to me, first of all, the *guide of our thinking,* the *interpreter of life,* the "master mind," if you will, of the centuries. The controlling convictions of Jesus' mind were true; and they are the most important convictions for all human living in all times.

This is the aspect of his supremacy which has always received least emphasis. It is the aspect of his supremacy which people of our day will be least willing to concede. "Yes, we acknowledge his pre-eminence in his own field—morality and faith—as prophet and mystic and idealist. But intellectual mastery—never! How could one with the intellectual horizons of two thousand years ago, without the scientific knowledge and historical perspective which are second nature to us—how could it be that one so limited could have anything supremely valuable and valid to say to the *mind* of today?" Yet I confess that it is pre-

cisely here that I find Jesus' supremacy most clear, most inescapable, most certain.

Our usual thought of Jesus is as "doer," not as "thinker." We picture him most readily as one busily preoccupied with an incessant round of practical activity, not as spectator or philosopher. It is far easier to speak of the personality of Jesus than of the mind of Jesus.

And yet there is much to be said for the contention that it is as thinker that Jesus stands most clearly preeminent. A moment's reflection will suggest that behind that magnetic and transcendent personality, that busy round of helpful activity, there were certain powerfully wrought and powerfully held convictions.

It is unquestionably evident that these were the source of his great public influence. It was not primarily because of his marvelous personality or even his powers of healing that men were astonished and followed him, but because he "spoke with authority," because in all he said there was an insight and a certainty, a power of conviction in union with an unmistakable grasp on truth, which carried their own validity. Men could not dodge it; they knew he was right. They were face to face with a mind which saw truly.

That was the cause of his end—the convictions of his mind. Men do not crucify a beneficent enthusiast, no matter how misguided they may believe him to be. Jesus' enemies plotted his death because each time they came in contact with him, they felt themselves up against an outlook on life, a set of convictions, which ran directly athwart their own and threatened all they held most dear. Here was truth and power which would unseat them unless they first destroyed it. For, however much men may disdain truth, they instinctively sense its devastating power. Jesus was crucified because of the convictions of his mind.

It is possible that it is by his mind that Jesus will finally

win or lose the allegiance of mankind. For he who would rule the world's life must be able to guide the world's thought. If you and I are finally gripped by the mastery of that person, it will be because the passing of time and ripening experience drive us to some such confession as this: "He was right! He had the truth. He IS truth! Here, with him, stand I; I can do no other."

There is no space to outline the convictions of Jesus' mind in detail. Let me speak of just two or three which have come to have more and more importance, and power, for my own thinking:

a. The first concerns *the nature of human life itself, and the fashion in which men may discover truth about it.* It appears to have been Jesus' conviction that *life at its core is fundamentally simple* and that *the primary condition for its comprehension* is not brilliance of intellect but *integrity of spirit.*

We live in a day that seems hopelessly confusing. There can be no question about the baffling complexity of contemporary society. What has happened, I would suggest, is something like this. Modern man has built for himself this intricate, overpowering, unmanageable modern civilization—a civilization that he thought was his pride and which threatens to prove his death. Our lives, caught in the toils of the society we have built, are infected by its diseases. The confusion of the civilization around us works its way into our inmost spirits and creates confusion there. Finally—the last step—we read into the nature of Reality itself the complexity and confusion that dwell within our own spirits. Man is up to his age-old trick again, creating God in his own image. Having built for himself a confused and disordered world life, he now assumes that to be the nature of Ultimate Reality.

Yet, in our moments of deeper insight, we know this isn't altogether true. Life is not a madman's puzzle, a

harassing and unintelligible phantasmagoria. Life is not so simple as to be uninteresting, nor so complex as to be unintelligible. We suspect that the child's approach may be more profound than the complex formulae of the philosophers. In Masefield's lines in "The Everlasting Mercy":

> The trained mind outs the upright soul,
> As Jesus said the trained mind might,
> Being wiser than the sons of light;
> But trained men's minds are spread so thin,
> They let all sorts of darkness in;
> Whatever light man finds, they doubt it.
> They love not light, but talk about it.[2]

Through the maze of modern existence—the complexity of the world about us, the confusion of inner life—moves the figure of Jesus, reassuring us that life at its core is not incomprehensible but intelligible, intelligible to all who will read aright their own experience, since its essential truths are few and simple. In the serenity and certainty of his own mind, he incarnated and thus demonstrated that simplicity.

b. Again it seems to have been Jesus' assumption that, *in the crucial issues of life, men and women know what is right.* It was not his task to convince them of this truth or persuade them to that course of action, but merely to remind them of what they already knew, to make inescapable by a vivid figure the truth they already possessed.

They brought him questions, political, ethical, religious —theological tangles and practical dilemmas. What attitude should men take toward an overbearing ruler, Rome? What should be done with a grossly immoral woman? Who is to blame for inherited blindness? What will be the conditions of marriage in the next life? Sometimes he gave them a direct answer. More often, he replied with a story, an illustration, or a biting rebuke. Fre-

[2] *Poems of John Masefield* (New York: Macmillan, 1913).

quently, he turned their inquiry back upon them with a counterquestion, clearly hinting that their query was gratuitous. Almost always, what he really seemed to be saying to them was something like this: "Why do you ask me? You already know the answer. Allow your mind to become quiet in order that it can think, your insight poised in order that it can see. *There* is your answer."

Once he put it so bluntly that none could miss it. "You can read the signs in the sky for forecasts of the weather. How is it you cannot read the signs of the times?" Implicit in this saying, and in Jesus' unfailing attitude, of which this is only a peculiarly striking expression, is the highest compliment that has ever been paid to our humanity—the assumption that all men and women possess capacities for the discernment of the most important truth. If correct, this is an extraordinary fact.

Here is the most fundamental characteristic of all Jesus' teaching. Argument and reasoning are almost wholly absent. There is analogy, parable, picture—reminders of truths already dimly sensed but evaded. He simply declares truth. There it is. Everyone honest with himself must recognize it. It is this which gives the words of Jesus their almost unbelievable dogmatism. It is this which gives them their weight of unique authority.

Is that not the way realization of all great truth comes to each one of us—not so much the discovery of something new as the awakening to something long familiar but neglected, distrusted, denied? Of one of the most effective preachers of our day it has been said, "He never tells me anything new. He reminds me of what I knew all along." That is the characteristic of all great teachers. They strike vibrant a note hidden deep in the recesses of our minds.

c. Once more, it appears to have been a fixed assumption of Jesus that there is *a direct causal relation between a man's determination to know the truth and its discovery,*

between the seeker's spiritual and moral integrity and his capacity for insight and wisdom. "Ask and you shall receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. Everyone who asks receives. The seeker finds. To him who knocks, the door swings wide." "Blessed are the pure in heart; they shall see God." "If the eye is single, the whole man is full of light." "Not every person who says 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who *does* the will of my Father in heaven." And especially, "He who wills to do God's will shall know the truth."

Our world is so ordered that there are moral preconditions for the discovery of the most significant truth. This is a very simple assumption. It involves far-reaching implications: at its core this world of ours is moral, ethical, spiritual. Every man honest with himself will recognize this fact. Further he will discern the perennial struggle of right against the forces of wrong. He will see this as also the central battle of his own life. He must yield to an inner compulsion to give himself in alliance with and service to the highest. Only by a life so purified and attuned and dedicated may great truth be surely seen. Positively, to the life so purified, attuned, dedicated, truth and right are increasingly disclosed. The discovery of truth, therefore, is not primarily a matter of information or brain power or shrewd reasoning. Rather it is a matter of attunement—the attunement of our spirit and purposes to the motif of Reality—to the purpose of God that we all dimly yet adequately recognize. The condition for the understanding of life and the knowledge of God is not merely *willingness* to do God's will; it is *eagerness, determination* to find it and to do it.

In summary, it was Jesus' conviction that life at its core is fundamentally simple; that the complexities of life, while real, are relatively peripheral, not central; that it is we who project the confusion within our own spirits onto

the universe, reading the nature of the world in terms of our own inner experience, and befuddling the simplicities of life by our willful blindness and our fondness for esoteric mystery.

It was Jesus' conviction that people always know more truth at any moment than they are practicing, and that the key to greater insight and wider knowledge is in living out the truth already seen.

It was Jesus' conviction that there is a direct relationship between the quality of a person's life and purpose and his capacity to discover truth; that it *is* the pure in heart who see God, and that those who are determined to do God's will are most certain to discover what that will is.

My own experience with the mind of Christ is twofold. I may read in the Gospels one of his most difficult sayings, one of his impossible paradoxes, "Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:15), or "He who seeks to save his life loses it, while he who loses his life finds it" (Mark 8:35). Preposterous sayings, they seem, which have against them common sense as well as the wisdom of the philosophers, sayings which run directly counter to the accepted practices of the world, sayings to which the world renders lip service and life scoffing. I say to myself, "Incredible! This is nonsense." Then I take these sayings out into the world, encounter the facts of life—and I discover that Jesus is right; they are true.

Or it may be that the process is just the reverse. I go out into the experience of life, seeking an explanation of some problem, searching for truth. I fumble along, befuddled and perplexed. Possibly I make some rather bad mistakes. Then I begin to catch a glimmer of light. I seem on the point of a discovery of great truth, but I cannot quite lay my hands on it. Then, lo and behold, I discover that twenty centuries ago Jesus saw this thing for which

I grope and expressed it perfectly in some simple statement like "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8), thus revealing the relation between purity of life and vision of the truth; or "He who wills to do God's will shall know" (John 7:17), thus revealing the relation between moral earnestness and vision of the truth. My thought is like a boomerang. Start it where you will, send it out into the free spaces of speculation in search of truth, and eventually it returns to alight at the same spot—at the mind of Christ. Or, to suggest a very crude metaphor, it is as if a man were in a desperate race to truth. He knows of an unmarked short cut which he feels certain will enable him to win. So he tears through underbrush and over ravines and up steep ascents until finally, sweaty and scarred and weary but glorying in anticipation of triumph, he rounds the last bend in the path and comes in sight of the end—to find his opponent seated at the goal, calm and relaxed and cool. Christ has beaten him to the goal of truth every time.

I discover nothing in the thought of Jesus which does not verify itself as true in experience. I discover in experience no truth of importance but to find that it is already in Jesus' thought. And when this has happened not twice or thrice but dozens of times, one comes to trust such a mind. It wins the only authority the lover of truth can recognize—the authority of insight tested and proved correct in practice. One learns to look to that Mind for the answers to all of life's problems. The deeper one delves into life, the more the pre-eminence of every other great thinker is dimmed, the more partial his grasp of truth appears. It is exactly otherwise with Jesus. My experience is that the deeper into life one goes, the more perplexing life becomes, but—the more complete does Jesus' understanding of it seem. Therefore, not because anyone has told me it is so, or because of any doctrines

about him, but because it has proved true in experience, Jesus has become the interpreter of life for me.

V

But there is another phase of the life of Jesus which seems to take on heightened importance as the years pass. It is the meaning one may draw from the drama of Jesus' career.

The forces which gathered around Jesus' life, which determined his career, and which finally brought him to an end of disgrace and failure, are the most powerful forces in the life of society in every age; and *Jesus' way of meeting and mastering those forces is the one effective way.*

The longer one studies the movement of that life and the more thoroughly one broods upon the world of our own day, the more striking is the parallelism between the forces which determined his destiny and the forces which strive for mastery over our contemporary world. For the world which Jesus faced, with all its superficial contrast, was akin to our own. He too faced a society of sharp social stratifications and inequalities, with consequent social unrest; a society of political corruption and oppression, with consequent incipient revolution; a society seared by bitter racial antagonisms, and consequent potential conflicts; a society where men constantly sought for some quick and easy panacea for their ills and looked for miraculous deliverance while human need everywhere cried for relief through hard labor. It was a world whose underlying temper and whose fundamental problems were not unlike those of our time.

More important, the basic issues in Jesus' own public destiny are the basic factors in human society today—and every day. We see those issues clearly revealed throughout the brief public ministry—in the conflict of forces which caused unbridled enthusiasm to give place to un-

principled opposition, and sent a noble friend of the common man to a disgraceful death with hardly a murmur in his defense.

The issues may be seen throughout, but they come to most vivid focus at the end, in the factors which finally put Jesus on the Cross.

What were the forces which sent Jesus to his end? The power of vested interests, political and religious, jealous of their prerogatives and heritages, hostile to any innovation, condemning as "radical" any insight which would have exposed their own insincerities. The insidious self-deception of pride, egotism, and ambition—self-consciously sincere, blinding men's eyes to true values, hardening their hearts to the common decencies of ordinary humanity. The wild irresponsibility of fear—causing men to falsify facts, to exaggerate offenses, to commit inhuman cruelties. Above all, the devastation of complacent indifference—the refusal of the bystander to shoulder moral responsibility. For in the final analysis, Jesus was crucified by the benevolent indifference of those who might have saved him but would not stir a hand.

Why, then, did men crucify Jesus? Dr. Coffin has drawn a vivid picture of the six or eight types of men who gathered around the cross and has pointed their unmistakable parallels in contemporary life.[3] In the personalities who, directly and indirectly, shared responsibility for Jesus' crucifixion we see epitomized the forces which are the enemies of our world's advance. What sent Jesus to the cross was not the sins of personal life, but the sins of public life. Not such sins as attack and down a man in his own chamber or scar his private relationships, but the sins that attack men when they meet in marketplace or parliament and make of our corporate relations dramas

[3] Henry Sloane Coffin, *The Meaning of the Cross* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931).

of personal ambition and intrigue, dogfights of selfish passion. Among the crucifiers may have been some whose personal morals could not stand scrutiny. They did not put him to death on that account; he did not threaten their private lusts. They crucified him because their social conventions were challenged, their privileges imperiled, their positions endangered. He appeared a political radical, a religious revolutionary. In brief, the crucifiers were not sinful men fearing exposure. They were public servants protecting the status quo. Jesus Christ was crucified by the bigotry of responsible public leadership and the complacent indifference of the masses.

In nineteen centuries, basic human nature has not changed perceptibly. Nor have the impulses and passions in men's make-up that strut across the arena of public events. The forces that destroyed Jesus are still the most powerful factors in mankind's corporate existence. Still these are the most dangerous enemies of his will and his kingdom: the power of vested interests, political and religious; the irrational irresponsibility of fear; the insidious self-deception of ambition, pride, egotism; the inertia of complacent indifference.

> Truth forever on the scaffold,
> Wrong forever on the throne.

And the way by which those forces may be conquered is still the same, the only way: unswerving loyalty to truth and faith in the final triumph of right. Jesus shows us where the issues of life really lie. And by his example, he may give us courage to do our small part in their fearless and right solution. It is no overstatement to say that the man who has grasped the drama of that Man's life has understood human history. The man who has made himself sharer in that Man's faith in face of death has made life's ultimate decision. He is a Christian.

VI

A third "meaning" Jesus may have for us is more fundamental than either of the other two.

The central temper of Jesus' spirit, his faith—deeper than convictions of the mind or acts of the life—was the noblest and truest possible for a human being; such faith is the secret of all highest living, and each life's greatest and final need, always.

Deep within every person's being are certain assurances and assumptions that are, more nearly than anything else, that person's *reality,* his true self. They are assurances of that which is most certainly to be trusted. They are assumptions upon which life may most confidently be lived.

They are not identical with beliefs of the mind, these assurances and assumptions; and they cannot surely be deduced from a person's professed creed. One's creed may be either better or worse than his life or his faith.

On the other hand, they are not necessarily fully consistent with a person's practice, these assurances and assumptions; they cannot always be discerned through his actions. A man's faith may be either better or worse, truer or more hollow, than his avowed beliefs or his conduct.

When spoken professions and unpremeditated actions and inner certainties are all of a piece, then and then only are we unified persons, whether scoundrels or saints. If speech and act and trust were wholly consistent with one another *and* wholly harmonious with God's purpose for that life, then and then only would a person attain to the measure of the stature of true manhood or womanhood. Such a person would be "God in human flesh."

It is one way to define the greatness of Jesus to recognize that in him profession, practice, and faith were all of a piece. The sentiments his mind declared were the principles his life illustrated. They were in seamless consistency because both proceeded unfailingly from that which

was deeper, surer, and more potent than creed or conduct, precepts or practice—his faith.

If we can penetrate to these assurances and assumptions, we have reached that which is ultimate in human personality. We can hardly do better than declare that Jesus' deepest faith was trust—implicit, seemingly blind trust, trust against the clear evidence of events—in the regnancy of God over life and history, and therefore in the ultimate effectiveness and final triumph of truth and right.

A man's faith is most clearly discerned in the few critical moments of his life when everything, even life itself, is at stake. If we would comprehend the faith of Jesus, we must turn our eyes to one point. We must draw close to him at the very end when the shadow of the Cross is no longer a distant premonition darkening the horizon from time to time but an immediate and inexorable inevitability. We must seek to accompany him to the Garden of Gethsemane when for the last time, and possibly for the first time, the end directly ahead with all its meaning of complete, abysmal failure stands clear and inescapable. We must hear his bitter appeal, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass."

What was the meaning of that cry? Fear of pain, it is sometimes said. Such an explanation is absurdly inadequate. Fear of disgrace, perhaps? We cannot imagine him shrinking from disgrace, however bitter. Fear of death, then? Surely Jesus was not one to fear death. No, but fear of *failure*. There is the enemy to shake the man devoted to principle. Failure which seemed to prove that he had been misguided, that the principles by which Jesus charted his course had been mistaken, that his faith had been misplaced. We may protest that it was not failure. We have nineteen centuries of history to guide our judgment. Jesus had nothing, nothing but his faith. The evidence was all against it, so much so that even that faith

appears to have wavered. But only for an instant. "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine."

We have defined Jesus' faith as trust in the triumph of truth and right. To put it thus is to state the matter abstractly. That which confirmed Jesus' assumption of the moral unity of the world and therefore of the ultimate triumph of fidelity to the highest, that which guided him through this supreme testing and sustained him in the even more severe test of tomorrow's death was a warmer, more intimate, more certain assurance than that. It was certainty of the living, holy, utterly trustworthy Sovereign of Reality. It was confidence in God. In that, everything else was implicit. By that, everything else received its surety, its power.

A simple but not altogether inadequate definition of the essence of Christianity might be: *Christian Faith is faith in the faith of Jesus.* It is committing oneself wholly to the convictions, the certainties, the hazards, the hopes to which he trusted his entire being. It is risking everything—one's future, one's success, one's life—in the act of absolute trust to which he gave all.

That is not the whole of Christian Faith. In nineteen long and exciting centuries of pilgrimage, Christian Faith has learned much that could not have been accessible to a single person living out a career of less than forty years in the reign of Caesar Augustus. Nevertheless, most of what we *most* need to be *certain of* concerning life and the universe and human destiny is to be learned most surely through him. By his influence it will lay grip upon our loyalties most firmly.

His is the faith we are called to share. As we have said, we have nineteen centuries of evidence to tell us that it works, that fidelity to this faith points the way of power, of victory. However, it is not likely that that fact will command us. Most mortals learn little and imperfectly from history. We shall require persuasion more living and grip-

ping than that. Two things that held Jesus steady are available for our aid—conviction of right, and an awareness, whether clear or dim, of the will and power of God. For us, however, there has been added a third factor—more intimate, more vital, more helpful. It is the example and companionship of One who was altogether faithful. He went that way. He calls us to join him and share his faith. When that faith has had opportunity to take full hold upon us, we shall cry: "He was right! He was—is—way, truth, life! Here, with him, stand I; I can do no other."

In the poem "St. Paul," W. H. B. Myers has Paul declare:

> Whoso has felt the spirit of the highest
> Cannot confound nor doubt him nor deny.
> Yea, O World, though thou deniest
> Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

VII

Moreover, here is a principal secret of Jesus' influence upon us, of the gift of power which we shall examine more fully in later chapters. The great word in Jesus' vocabulary, the word most frequently on his lips, was not love or truth, but faith. It was faith he continually inspired in people—not only faith in God and faith in himself, but faith in themselves.

As we study the power of human friends over our lives, we realize that their greatest helpfulness comes through their faith in us. Think of that person who has had the largest influence for good in your life. He or she may have taught you much of the truth you know about life. The companionship of his life may have meant much strength to you. At times he has been your fearless critic; you are grateful for that. But closer study will show that most of the incalculable debt you owe is due to another influence

he has had in your life—an intangible and illusive something which we call *faith.*

We are what we are because of the transforming power of other people's faith in us. This is the greatest human force in all the world. That man helps me most who knows me through and through—all the bad in me as well as the good in me—and believes in me still; who is the merciless critic of my life, but who can be it helpfully because in him criticism is overtopped by faith; who, while criticizing, does something else far more difficult—as it were, places himself right within my life, showing me the lower and the higher self, the man I am and the man I might be, convinces me that the better self can triumph, and allies himself with the higher nature he sees, to make it dominant in my life.[3] That is the transforming power of persistent faith. And that is the power-giving influence upon us of steady contact with the mind and spirit of Jesus. There becomes real to us God's expectation of us, made known to us through Christ.

This suggests the final reason for the power men have found through Christ; he is their guide into companionship with God. Here again, may I be very personal? We come into a sense of companionship and copartnership with God in a variety of ways—through Nature, through meditation, through worship, through work, and so on.[4] For myself much of the experience of God has come through definite attempts at service, especially work with underprivileged folk in the slums of our great cities. But

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[3] "I perceive faults in my social acquaintances, but I do not make a practice of telling them their faults, because my relations with them are still subject to the abstract assumptions of our artificial selfhoods. But whatever fault I discover in one whom I love I make known to him: for thereby I address the self which I have discovered, simpler and greater than the self of that fault, and which can join me in being hostile to it." W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), p. 432.

[4] See Chs. Eight, Nine, and Ten below.

I discover on recollection that the God who has become a reality in these various ways is the Father of Jesus Christ.

Many people have taken their thought of God over from the Gospels all at once—wholesale, so to speak. I find that I have not; it has been built up laboriously, step by step. Let me try to express it in a figure. I discover my mind has been at work on something like the construction of a mosaic, seeking to fit a thousand different pieces, large and small, bit by bit, into a consistent whole—selecting, trying, rejecting, readjusting, testing. The pieces are picked up and used just as they come to hand. I do not note where each piece comes from; I use it. It is largely an intuitive and experimental process. The mosaic is very incomplete and will always remain so—in the process of being completed. But as far as it is now finished, it shows itself to be made up of two distinct parts: there is a *background,* framing a *central figure.* The framework seems to furnish the atmosphere in which the central figure is set. It concerns the universe and God's attributes in relation to the universe—his majesty, his transcendence, his eternity, his omnipresence. And I discover on examination that the pieces which make up this framework have come mainly from science and history and philosophy. But the central figure which gives to the whole mosaic its only real significance concerns the character of God. It is the portrait of a toiling Fellow Worker, an undiscourageable Friend, a loving Father. And when I examine the fragments of that central portion bit by bit, I discover that almost all the pieces, if not every piece, have come, directly or indirectly, from the same source—the mind of Jesus. They have been placed in the mosaic because they proved themselves in experience to fit; but originally they came from him. That is the fact of the case which I cannot evade. That is what I mean by an empirical approach to my view of Christ. I do not say, "No man

cometh unto the Father except by him." I do say, "I have come to the Father only by him."

A few years ago, a friend of mine, who all his life had been a great lover of art, took as his traveling companion through Italy a college student whose attitude toward all things artistic was one of haughty disdain. My friend was too wise to press his interest in the beautiful upon him. For several days they toured Rome, doing what the younger man suggested, seeing only the things in which he was interested. One day as they were passing St. Peter's, the older man said, "Do you mind if we slip in here for just a moment; there's one painting on the ceiling I want to take a glance at." They stayed hardly a minute. The next day it was five minutes in one of the art galleries, then half an hour at the Coliseum, and so on. When they returned home at the end of the summer, the younger man too was a lover of art. Without his realization, my friend had introduced him to the meaning of beauty.

Jesus does something similar to that in our understanding of God. Day by day we seek to attune our minds to his as we find it in the Gospel records. We try to make vivid his personality, steeling our imaginations to send us through the course of his life with him as an understanding companion. We set ourselves to learn what he thought and how he felt, and why. Gradually, or it may be suddenly, we awake to the recognition that, in the process of understanding Jesus, God—the God whom he called Father—has become real to us. So it is not simply that we *believe* in God "through" Jesus Christ but—far more significant—we *know* God through Jesus Christ.

Christianity's power to bring redemption to mankind rests finally in its grip on truth. The core of its claim to truth is its certainty of God. The God of that certainty is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, the God in whom Jesus himself completely trusted.

Christians' certainty of God, their reliance upon him,

is possible for them only through their trust in Jesus' faith in him. We have suggested that not a bad definition of the essence of Christianity is this: faith in the faith of Jesus Christ, trust in him in whom Jesus trusted altogether. That faith in the God and Father of Jesus Christ becomes possible for us by virtue of Jesus' trust in him. Our faith is, quite literally, "through Jesus Christ, our Lord." The nub of it all can hardly be better put than in Paul's great phrase: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Corinthians 4:6).

VIII

Two final questions trouble many people:

1. What is the character and extent of *Jesus' authority* for our thought and life today?

Well, let us be clear exactly what Christian Faith affirms concerning Jesus. That affirmation is that *in Jesus of Nazareth, God himself was as fully present as it is possible for him to be present in a human life.* Jesus' thought, feeling, will were identical with God's intention for him. In and through Jesus' words and acts and attitudes and inmost spirit, the Life of God spoke as fully as it was possible for the Sovereign of all reality to find expression through a man of Nazareth in the days of the Caesars.

This is a very great claim. But it is a claim implying definite limitations. Limitations of knowledge—such knowledge as could normally have been available to a man of Jesus' time, place, and circumstance. Limitations of outlook—such breadth of comprehension and depth of insight as could occur in a genuine human spirit of that day. Limitations of divine indwelling, of incarnation. It is a mistake to claim that in Jesus, the whole Being of God

was present, that God's purpose was fully expressed through him. If we are to make earnest with the assertion of Jesus' humanity, we must recognize that only such of the Being and Purpose of God found expression in and through him as was appropriate and possible for one of his heritage, his era, his span of experience.

More specifically, there are parts of his teaching where he is discussing the fundamental and eternal problems of human experience—problems which are in essence the same in every age and among every people just because they lie at the very heart of life. Here his teaching is as vitally contemporary as though it came over the radio at this hour. Lift out of the circumstances of their occurrence his thought and the experience which gave birth to the thought, and neither their intelligibility nor their validity is in the least affected. They stand the tests of truth and universality.

But there are parts of his teaching of which this is not true. Many of his sayings were spoken to specific and concrete situations. They fairly smack of the atmosphere of the moment. Those situations will never recur. The permanent importance which the sayings have springs from their vivid contemporaneity, from the fact that they were not general principles enunciated for all time, but rare illustrations of how a true mind grounded in eternal principles meets the concrete bafflement of real life. Here we are not so much conscious of Jesus' fundamental ideas as of the pressure of events upon his life. We get light not from the truth of his mind, but from the meaning of his career.

Jesus offers no blueprint for life, an example to be slavishly copied. Rather, he is himself an illustration of a genuine human life lived wholly in fidelity to the specific purpose of God for him, an illustration which may instruct and inspire and empower us to bring our very different lives, lived in very different circumstances, more nearly

into conformity with God's quite different purposes for them. He serves men, less as a reservoir from which specific directions may be tapped than as a tuning fork by which their souls may be keyed to the Divine Spirit, and so they may be enabled to play forth the melodies of their own beings more truly in harmony with that Spirit's intention for them.

2. What, then, of the *finality,* the *absoluteness of Jesus,* of which the churches speak so much? How can we be certain that he will not some day be surpassed and superseded?

I confess this question always strikes me as unreal, a purely theoretical question, smacking suspiciously and familiarly of the academic atmosphere. Doubtless that is probably why one most often meets this particular question in academic groups. When the question is put, I find myself inclined to respond, not with a solemn argument for Jesus' ultimacy and finality, though such arguments can be made, but with two concrete illustrations, one very trivial, the other drawn from one of the decisive episodes of human history.

I am always reminded of the most famous and familiar cartoon of the First World War. Bruce Bairnsfeather depicted two British Tommies sharing inadequate refuge in an altogether too shallow shell-hole while enemy shells scream just above their heads. One Tommy complains to his comrade, "This is a 'ell of a 'ole." But his more realistic companion replies, "Well, if you'se knows a better 'ole, go to it." And to those who press the query of Jesus' finality, one who is dead in earnest about the life of the world and its future is likely to make reply, "Well, if you know a truer Leader, a more inspiring Comrade for life's struggle, a more adequate portrait of the Living God, go to him. And lead us all to him. But, if not, Jesus claims and deserves the absolute devotion of your life."

The other incident is recorded in the Gospel of John. It is a portrait in frank realism, for the central figure is Simon Peter, and, whatever else he may have been, Peter was above everything else a realist. He faced the facts of life fearlessly, practically, relentlessly. There is no better example of his realism than this incident. It stands at the very central point in the drama of Jesus' life. Behind is a story of early great popularity, of vast crowds and many cures and boundless enthusiasm, and then popularity increasingly colored by opposition, argument, clash. Ahead is the certain prospect of further conflict. Just over the horizon are darker clouds which can mean only one end. To anyone with vision, the shadow of the Cross falls unmistakably across the path.

This occasion stands at the crisis. The feeble-hearted have already melted away. Of the vast crowds, only a scattered handful remain; they are held largely by a sense of shame. None of this escapes Jesus. And so he tests them with the question, "Will you also go away?" We sense a dumb silence which Jesus fully understands. And then Peter—selfish, blundering, materially minded Peter—pierces to the heart of the situation: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

It is a portrait in realism. And Peter was a realist for two reasons. First, because he insisted on facing practically life's alternatives; he was never satisfied with a merely negative answer but put to himself relentlessly the question, "If not this, then what?" Second, because he was a desperately earnest man and, as such, he knew he must have a leader for his life. Realism is one of the great words in the vocabulary of our day, but few of us have the courage to be true realists. The man who is in earnest about life and who therefore seeks leadership—guidance for his mind and power for his life—will, even in moments of most difficult doubt, find himself facing Peter's alternative,

"If not Christ, who?" And he will find himself returning from all the experiences which life may bring with steadier conviction day by day, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

CHAPTER FIVE

Why the Church?

RELIGION, YES. . . . Christianity, perhaps. . . . But—*why the Church?*" For some years, it has been possible to summarize youth's attitudes toward Christianity in two phrases: a steadily deepening interest in religion, and a steadily mounting indifference to the institutions of religion—that is, toward the Church.[1]

II

Certainly few persons ever came to manhood with a more unfavorable opinion of the Christian Church than I. From the indelible memories of boyhood, the word "church" still unfailingly evokes two vivid pictures, each heavily charged with repellent associations.

First, large numbers of great, dark, often ugly, almost always locked, unused buildings set down at some of the busiest and most valuable street corners of the world's life while quick and fascinating currents of thought and activity surged around and past them. To a lad's view,

[1] *Fortune's* brilliant survey of American youth in its June 1936 issue declared, "There is an inchoate hunger for religion, or at least for philosophical certitude. But it is difficult to see much hope for institutional religion among those who lust for certainty."

islands of slumbering inactivity amid the urgent flow of public affairs, they seemed. Even today, I seldom pass a silent church building on a crowded thoroughfare without a shudder of revulsion along my spine.

Second, two particular churches where as a boy, come eleven o'clock on Sunday mornings, I sat on under dull, mournful, interminable preaching by two elderly gentlemen in funereal black robes—undoubtedly sincere but, so it seemed to youth, rather futile. Only long years later did the boy, now come of age, learn to revere and even love those preachers as humble and devoted servants of their fellow men. Today, despite my own work in the ministry and wide friendship within the profession, a dog-collar still lifts an involuntary barrier and disdain within me.

The peripheral lethargy if not laziness of the Church, the ineptitude if not stupidity of the ministry—*irrelevance* and *futility*—these are the two most ineffaceable deposits from my early associations. Surely not many can have carried into manhood more hostile attitudes toward institutional religion. Such a legacy from youth's sharp and confident judgments has left problems for one whose life is now given not merely to the Church but to the training of its ministry. Instinctively, I view the Church always somewhat from outside and with exacting standards of appraisal. But the legacy has also left its boon. Those early impressions have assured that I should never become the Church's unthinking apologist, that I cannot be blind to its shortcomings or rest happily with the pettiness and futility of many Christians and their churches.

What, it may be asked, has effected so radical a conversion in any one person's attitude toward the Church? Three things, at least: a deeper understanding of the needs of our time; a more accurate and more adequate appreciation of what the Christian Church in history has, in fact,

been and done; a truer picture of the realities of the Christian Movement today and of its role for mankind's future.

III

No one who tests the pulse of contemporary sentiment can have failed to detect signs of a reviving interest in "the Church." Not in the existing churches as many youth have known them, to be sure—the "Northern Presbyterian Church" of Pinville, western South Carolina, or the "Christian Church" at Main and Market Streets, Middletown, glaring defiance across its four-corners at three other Christian congregations of various breeds. But in a reaching for *something* that can be suggested only by the word "the Church." On his last visit to this country, the late Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, declared:

> It is no accident that, certainly in the country from which I come, and as I have been two or three times assured, in this country also, the minds of students who are seriously considering the Christian Faith at all, are becoming more and more occupied with the doctrine of the Church.[2]

And the editors of perhaps our largest and most influential chain of popular journals, noted for their acute sensitiveness to trends in public sentiment, who in 1936 had declared that "it is difficult to see much hope for institutional religion," reported ten years later:

> There is no doubt that the irritation of our times centers in the area of religion. Disguised as political, ideological, economic feuds, all of the battles of our epoch come finally down to a desire for religious reorientation. The Church is no longer on the defensive. . . . There is a seemingly general trend toward institutional religion.

[2] William Temple, *The Church and Its Teaching Today* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), p. 9.

Here, as always, the phrase to which men instinctively have recourse to voice their inarticulate longing has significance far beyond its obvious meaning. What is the deeper significance of this turning toward "the Church"?

IV

In part, it is clearly *a reaction from individualism.* We have come out of a time when every man was his own theologian, every minister his own interpreter of final truth, every arbitrary whim of individual inspiration an absolute authority for that life and for others within its power. Today, despite the plague of dictators, individual omniscience in religion is at a discount. The day of the solitary monarch of truth has passed. Yet, men must have guidance for belief and life. Where shall they find it unless in the accumulated wisdom in the life of the Church?

In part, the turning toward the Church is one phase of the *renaissance of worship* which is among the most unmistakable features of the contemporary scene. For some years, students whose theological conviction is of the flimsiest, who disdain the churches as they have known them, and whose intense concern is the practical salvaging of a distraught society, have been crying out for "worship." And the "worship" so eagerly sought is not that of the individual in his solitariness, but corporate worship, with generous use of form and ritual. This leads to the Church—the only fully satisfying locus of worship as well as a treasure house of materials for worship.

In part, it springs from *a rediscovery of the riches of the past.* Or, more accurately, a "feeling out after" such a rediscovery. Not a few Christians today, and they among the more mature, seek a firm grounding for Christian living, not within the life of modern culture, or even of the traditional Protestantism in which their parents were reared, but in the rich, deep stream of cumulative expe-

rience that has flowed down nineteen centuries toward us. They would drink deep of its insights and its faith.

There is a deeper spring of the contemporary reaching out toward "the Church." If it is partly a reflection of the dominant temper of the times, it is also an instinctive *defense against the supreme menace of the times.* Shortly before his death, Canon Barry wrote:

> Christianity can barely survive amid the intolerant blizzards of mass rule save as a society conscious of itself and organized by its own transcendent allegiance. Nothing but a revival of the Church can withstand the usurpations of Caesarism.

And he aptly quoted John Strachey:

> Life, with the growth of large-scale production, is becoming less and less individual and more and more communal again. Thus for anyone who can achieve religious belief at all, the Catholic form of Christianity is becoming increasingly appropriate.

In a day of mounting totalitarianisms, when men's minds, their consciences, and even their lives are more and more conscripted in servitude to the nationalist State, how shall those things for which we most care—freedom of speech, tolerance, spiritual liberty, world brotherhood—survive, unless they secure a more effective champion that will, if need be, stand resolutely against the State and every pressure of organized coercion in defense of the life of the spirit? A recovery of the Church is a necessity for the health of religion in our day. More than that, it is a necessity for the survival of civilization.

V

For many, the first realization that the Christian Church has ever been anything other and more than the commonplace institution at Main and Market Streets has come

through a visit to one of the cathedral towns of Europe. To wander into the central square at Chartres or Antwerp or York, and suddenly to be confronted with the overtowering structure of the Cathedral, is to be transported in imagination into a world where the Church held meaning far beyond anything Middletown or Miller's Crossroad suggests. First, it is to be silenced before the sheer *beauty* of the thing, and to have seep in on one the realization that, in the times of its erection, the Christian Church was the great creator and conserver of beauty. Then, on reflection, it is to awake to the *devotion* there embodied—plenty of perfunctory one-hour-a-week allegiance, doubtless; but also profound affection and loyalty speaking through consummate craftsmanship and tireless construction. Finally, on further reflection, the significance of the Cathedral's *centrality* may come home to the observer—centrality of location toward which every road and every activity of the medieval town and its surrounding countryside pointed, truly symbolizing an absolute centrality and primacy of influence.

The Church of the Middle Ages was, in truth, the hub from which every communal concern radiated, the keystone holding in unity the diverse interests and loyalties of men and lifting them toward their ultimate Center above, the fulcrum upon which all human existence pivoted, the generator and director of dynamic energies for advance. It was the molder of thought, furnishing the only education available and wielding an undisputed intellectual authority. It was the sponsor of all good works—medicine, hospitals, orphanages, charity. It was the principal arbiter of people's lives, administering much of the justice and wielding a mighty civic authority. It was the sole locus of worship, determining men's eternal destiny, and wielding final spiritual authority.

However, it is not necessary to look to Europe or to the Middle Ages for evidence of the historic place and func-

tions of the Church. One need only stroll with insight across a typical New England town Common or village green and note, in the central position, the gracious white meetinghouse lifting its spire toward heaven to be reminded that, in the times and life of the Founding Fathers, the Church held a comparable significance. One may even wander up Wall Street and, if imagination can dissolve the constructions of today, Manhattan of a century ago will re-emerge and Trinity Church, now dwarfed by skyscrapers, will recover its pre-eminence and centrality of both position and influence.[3]

Even today and anywhere on the earth's surface, one may go out to the last frontier of civilization and from there press on through wilderness or jungle until ultimately one emerges into a grass-grown clearing (contemporary equivalent of medieval square or New England Common) marked by three buildings—at the center, a church, and on either flank, hospital or school. Wherever the gifts of civilized living are first being brought to those wholly without their benefit, the Christian Church stands at the hub of existence, the bestower of education, of healing, of knowledge, of faith, and the unifying center for individual and corporate life.[4]

VI

These facts suggest the larger question, "What *has* the Christian Church actually been throughout its history?" To this query, no neat and simple picture may be painted in reply. At various times and places in nineteen centuries, the Church has been not one but many different things.

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[3] That that is the true role of the Church, especially with respect to education, I have argued in a little book, *God in Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

[4] See the author's *For the Healing of the Nations: Impressions of Christianity Around the World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940).

To an acute historical eye, it renders the impression at any period after the third century of a gigantic body with two small and militant wings and a great hulking center.

On one side is the *wing of reaction*—nursemaid of superstition and bigotry, enemy of science, sponsor of Crusades and Inquisition, sanctifier of corruption and immorality in high places—the Church of the Borgias and Rasputin and Elmer Gantry.

At the center is the main bulk of the Church in every age, *the conventional Church*—a fairly representative cross section of the contemporary community, somewhat purified and empowered by contact with its Founder and Lord —the churches of Middletown at Main and Market Streets.

On the other side (rather far out ahead) is the *wing of creative life*—mother of the arts, sponsor of the philanthropies, father of reforms, begetter of revolutions—the Church of Paul and Augustine, of Francis and Abélard, of Luther and Erasmus, of Howard and Wilberforce and Livingstone and Florence Nightingale, of Grenfell and Schweitzer and Kagawa—merciless critic of the conventional Church, unwearying purifier of the conventional Church, often martyred by the conventional Church, yet *always* born from the loins of the conventional Church—its child, its outcast, its redeemer. All these things, the Church has been, and is.

VII

If we ask, "What have been the most significant characteristics of the Church at any period?" again history returns a complex answer:

The Earliest Church, progenitor of them all—informal spiritual fellowships without buildings, possessions, organization, ritual, or public authority, welded by secure bonds of common experience and certainty and loyalty—

oases of relatively clean life and hope and energy in a desert of deepening sterility—living cells within the dying organism of an empire, a culture, a civilization.

The Church of the Dark Ages, teetering on the brink of a crumbling world—the one institution with sufficient inherent vitality and tenacity to survive the catastrophic disintegration of a whole civilization, thus bearing in its bosom the wealth of the funded treasures of man's past, and seeding them within the nascent civilization yet unborn.

The Medieval Church, focal center of all life, guardian of learning, of education, of philanthropy, of medicine, of justice, of faith—locus of authority over both temporal and spiritual destiny—above all, organ of unity, effecting the unity of each local community through its parish church and priest, effecting the unity of mankind through the authority of the Papacy in the organism of Christendom.

The Reformation Church, again rescuing spiritual reality and freedom from the strangling grip of dry rot, this time the death-hand of a corrupt ecclesiastical hierarchy—proclaiming afresh an ideal for every soul that has always been of the essence of Christian Faith but which the Church has seldom dared to take seriously.

The Church of the Nineteenth Century, the most fertile and fruitful in the long sequence. We who dwell under the shadow of recent events always lack perspective rightly to appraise their significance. But by any standards which might be proposed, the nineteenth century was the period of most extensive, varied and noteworthy accomplishment in Christian history. In the eyes of secular history, this was the "century of reform." Almost every one of the great crusades for mankind's liberation and relief which distinguished it—for the abolition of the slave trade, prison reform, abolition of slavery itself, improved conditions of labor, equality for women, elimination of child labor, temperance, world peace—was inspired by Christian mo-

tives and pioneered by men under Christian impulsion. In that same century, the Church was the powerhouse of the most wide-reaching and indomitable movement of extension ever undertaken, carrying its message of hope and its gifts of practical helpfulness to every continent and virtually every nation on the earth's surface.[5]

The Church of Today, the single unshattered community of all peoples in a world racked with conflict and threatened with death.

All these, and more, the Church has been.

VIII

From what the Church has in fact been, we may form our conception of what the Church should be. Five distinct functions for the life of mankind, the Christian Church has performed:

1. The Church has been the *custodian of the funded values of the past.* To the eye of the detached objective historian, this has been its most obvious role. In the hackneyed jibe that the Church is inherently conservative, there is this much truth—the Christian Church has been western civilization's great "conserver." It was the supreme service of the Church of the Roman Empire. The Christian Church has watched empire after empire, economy after economy, civilization after civilization rise, come to dominating power, have its day, and pass away. Through their advent and decline, it has persisted—corrupted more or less by participation in their success, shaken more or less in the convulsion of their fall—but continuing. It has survived. More than that, it has preserved within its continuing life most of the salvage from their wreckage.

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[5] See the author's *World Christianity: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury and Friendship Press, 1948).

2. The Church, at its periods of widest public influence, has, as we have just noted, supplied *focal unity for corporate life*—for the daily life of common folk through their parish church, for the life of humanity through the conception of Christendom and of a single organic Body of Christ, the Church Universal. This, too, has been its obvious role in the eye of the detached objective historian. This was the Church's pre-eminent function in the medieval world; yet hardly less in the society of Elizabeth, or of Early America, or of our grandparents.

3. The Church has been the germinative *seedplot of the most fecund, most creative, most radical forces in the life of the time.* Professor Hocking declares that religion's most obvious mark upon history has been that of "perpetual parentage." "The thing has been radical; it has had some grip upon the original instincts of human nature." It has been thus creative, not by merging itself within its culture, but by standing sharply apart from the common life and castigating the prevailing culture. Here is one key to the Church's amazing power of conservation, its longevity, its vitality. This was a striking characteristic of the Early Church—"these Christians will turn the world upside down." It has never been wholly absent. It was most strikingly and effectively evident in the Church of the period immediately preceding our own. When the Church has been vitally alive, this feature has been powerfully present.

These are history's judgments upon the Church. But all through its pilgrimage, at every moment of that amazing biography of change and re-birth, of ebb and flow, the Church has been two other things—one much more obvious and mundane; the other much more intangible and ultimate, often hidden from the eye of the detached observer, but of the very essence of its being and its meaning.

4. It has been the *spiritual confidant and sustainer and friend of uncounted hosts of ordinary folk.* This is the Church of Pinville and Miller's Crossroad, the Church of Middletown at Main and Market—and of their progenitors in first-century Corinth, and fourth-century Rome, and twelfth-century Chartres. In every era and at every moment of its history, the Church has been meeting folk in the intimacies of their souls' struggle, darkness, suffering, and triumph, where need pressed most heavily, ministering its light, its healing, its comfort, its challenge, its strength, its assurance.

5. The Church has furnished a sense of destiny, *a foretaste of the Ultimate Goal of the human pilgrimage,* both individual and corporate. For the Church *is* not only what all the world sees but what the Church intends, what it would become. That end is not a human institution but the family of God, the kingdom of God. Canon Sheppard shortly before his death wrote of Jesus, "He was on fire with the idea of the Kingdom; it was *that,* and not the Church, that was his main and passionate concern." Men labor in and through the Church that it may more nearly achieve its true destiny—the kingdom of God.

IX

So much for the Church of the past. But what about the Church of today?

Some ten years ago, it was my privilege to take a trip around the world. The ostensible purpose was to attend a World Missionary Conference at Madras. Actually, its objective was to subject the concrete actualities of the Christian World Movement to critical observation and exacting scrutiny, to ferret out the truth, nothing but the truth, and—as far as time permitted—the whole truth about Christian Missions today; to put to the test certain

profound uncertainties and misgivings about World Christianity. Therefore, the journey to Madras was planned to occupy six months rather than one, and to follow a circuitous route which circled the Pacific basin and touched most of the principal countries of Asia, Australasia, and the islands of the Pacific. In some hundred centers in twenty lands, the Christian Movement was visited, examined, and appraised. What follows must be confined to impressions which were overarching and irresistible.

What is the Christian World Movement? [6] Three things, at least:

1. *The Christian World Movement is an agency of manifold and immeasurable helpfulness to individuals and communities.*

One sees this most clearly when he observes the Church at work amid the most unprivileged, neglected, and needy. For example, consider Christianity among primitive peoples.

Only one who has observed primitive life at first hand can form an adequate picture; reports will be discounted as one-sided and exaggerated. There is no shortage of food, no unemployment, no destitution. But in tropical climates where tuberculosis, leprosy, hernia, cholera, trachoma thrive, there is no doctor within hundreds or thousands of miles, no medicine save the frightening and futile rigmarole of a village medicine man. Not only are there no schools: there is no written language; therefore, no access to history, art, culture, knowledge, civilization, intelligent faith—until the day comes when a trained linguist shall come among them to master their dialects,

[6] An attempt at a fuller picture of the Christian World Movement is given in a little book, *For the Healing of the Nations: Impressions of Christianity Around the World* (New York: Scribner, 1940), upon which the following paragraphs draw freely, and in *World Christianity: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury and Friendship Press, 1948).

reduce them to written characters, and open for them a way of contact to the riches of man's past; the world over, that man is almost always a Christian missionary. Of morals, it need only be said that they are at primitive level. Most serious of all is the spiritual outlook. For, however peripheral the place religion may occupy in our culture, among primitive peoples religion is the matrix of social cohesion, the guardian of traditions and taboos, the administrator of morality, the interpreter of their universe, the awesome determiner of their faith and their fate. Primitive religion is a complex of grotesque, sordid, immoral, and horrific superstitions (inwoven with some gracious or naïvely childish elements), whose principal effect upon its adherents is an overshadowing, all-pervasive apprehension and dread. This it is which dominates the existence of themselves and their children and their children's children and their neighbors and their neighbor's children down an unending future.

Penetrating the jungle or wilderness comes the Christian Church. Do we imagine it, after the caricatures of not so long ago, in the person of a long-haired missionary in long black coat, umbrella under arm, setting up an improvised pulpit under a palm tree and, Bible in hand, exhorting his naked auditors to eschew their heathen ways and accept Christ? Rather, we must imagine the Church epitomized in three or four persons—minister, teacher, doctor, nurse, possibly a language expert or agriculturalist or social worker. A clearing is cut. Simple buildings go up—church, school, hospital.

Rumor filters through the jungle. Litters are borne from long distances carrying chronic invalids—some blind for decades from trachoma, others writhing in acute agony with hernia, tuberculars incipient and advanced, lepers outcast from their homes and communities. Children are sent long distances to the school. Improved methods of farming are instituted. Better houses are erected. Sanita-

tion is taught. A leper asylum offers haven and treatment for primitive society's most feared and despised pariahs. From their center, the team of colleagues go forth in varied ministries in every direction as far as human strength permits. Branch dispensaries are inaugurated to be attended by periodic visits from itinerant doctor or nurse. Village schools are started as rapidly as native teachers can be trained. Little chapels draw the more earnest and inquiring and sensitive together for simple, comradely, reverent worship. Slowly, fear is dispelled, superstition is laid aside, a wholly new outlook on existence takes their place, drunkenness and adultery and gambling decrease, and the core of the beings of the people comes under sway of a simple, confident, joyous faith. And so on and on.

All through inner Asia, straight across the Middle East, in practically the whole of the interior of Africa and much of its littoral, widely among the islands of the seas, not to speak of remoter areas in China, Siam, India, the Near East and sections of Latin America, there are millions upon millions, hundreds of millions of men, women, and children whose lives, day in and day out, are invariably shadowed by disease without medicine, by ignorance without enlightenment, by gnawing fear without faith—people who will have none of these things which we regard as the basic necessities of existence unless and until the Christian Church brings them thither.

Only less dramatic and striking is the significance of this basic work of the Christian Movement in lands of ancient culture and more advanced civilization.

There is the contribution of *medical service.* All over India, appalling conditions of disease, undernourishment, malformation, epidemic, lack of sanitation, superstition regarding physical handicaps cry for an unlimited expansion of the healing, educative services of Christian medicine. In Greater New York, there is one doctor for every

five hundred of the population. In a certain province of China there is one doctor with modern medical training for every million people.

There is a matter of special interest to youth and students—*higher education for women.* Visitors to this country often report their impression that the most interesting and attractive feature of American life is the American woman's college. That contribution, American women, through the Church, have taken to the ends of the earth. Clear across the world one comes upon them—in Japan and China and Korea, in India and the Near East, in Africa and Latin America—the American woman's college in all its beauty of setting, its charm of atmosphere, its freedom and vitality of thought, transplanted thither by American college alumnae, planted in strange soil, now firmly rooted and indigenous, growing vigorously and healthily as a native plant. Among primitive peoples just emerging from the superstitions and binding mores of communal life, there would be small hope of even the most elementary education for women were it not for Christian Missions and their schools. Yet here women are advancing side by side with men in the parity of life and thought and opportunity that is one of the noblest ideals of Christian civilization. So, whether it be the provision of higher education for women where no other is available, or the progressive leadership of women's education where government institutions now follow the lead of Christian missions, Christian woman's colleges have pioneered and are continuing to pioneer advance for their sex all over the world.

One might add instances from a dozen other fields—the lifting of agriculture by introduction of modern knowledge and methods for a whole province in China; improved stock breeding to meet the desperate cattle problem of India; the development of new, cheap, and sani-

tary houses for the dwellers in village mud huts who constitute the great bulk of India's teeming millions; housing experiments and model communities for great cities; sanitary systems for congested slums or for jungle villages; care of outcast segments of the population, such as lepers and feeble-minded; beginnings in social service; community surveys and town planning. *There is no other organization or movement that reaches out toward every corner of the earth, toward every people and every aspect of their life—for health and enlightenment, for reconciliation and redemption.*

Behind these obvious and tangible needs that make an immediate appeal to American practicality, there are always the far profounder though subtler yearnings of the human spirit for understanding of human existence, for ideals and moving loyalties, for inner resources against life's temptations and bafflements, for assurance of God and his Concern and Power—that is, for living, intelligible, guiding, and gripping religious faith. *The Christian Movement is the only world-wide agency with a conception, a strategy, and a determination for the amelioration of basic human need and the furnishing of the essentials of true living for all mankind.*

2. *The Christian World Movement is a force of very considerable importance for the life of individual nations.*

Most people, inside or outside the Church, think of its influence almost entirely in terms of spiritual helpfulness to individuals. They assume that its significance for the life of nations is negligible. This is especially true in their conceptions of the Church overseas. This assumption springs in part from the idea that, since the Church is working mainly among the depressed and neediest classes, its appeal is solely to the lower strata of society. There is strong evidence to precisely the opposite conclusion. It is the cultured and educated leadership of the Orient to

whom Christianity has made strongest appeal and who have given it the most convinced adherence.

Take a single illustration, from a land in the forefront of our attention in these latter days—Korea. Here is a population of 20,000,000, of whom 85 per cent are farmers, increasingly ground down to economic serfdom, with desperate poverty on every hand. The nation itself, because of its unhappy location amid mighty empires, has been the cat's-paw of imperialism for centuries, continually buffeted between its powerful neighbors. Today persecution of inconceivable cruelty threatens every intelligent and patriotic North Korean. It is not directed against Christians because of their religion, but because they so largely constitute the intellectual and moral leadership of the Korean people. Is it an accident that the great father of the New Korea, the revered leader and saint of the entire populace, was a devout Christian (as, indeed, was the father of Modern China, Dr. Sun Yat Sen)? Or that the main impact of persecution falls, all out of proportion to their numbers, upon the youthful Korean Christians?

What hope for Korea does the future portend, one may ask? It is not easy to answer that query with confidence. In a day when totalitarian imperialism so largely dominates the affairs of *all* peoples, the political fate of Korea, like the small nations of Europe, hangs on the outcome of the great conflicts which engulf her. Where, if anywhere, is the source of internal endurance and strength for the people, whatever their external fate? The answer to that question is crystal-clear. It is found in those same institutions which have so largely furnished her with leadership of character and courage in the past and present, spread widely through the length and breadth of the nation—the sole effective agencies of enlightenment, enheartenment, and resolute fortitude amid this humble, poverty-ridden populace. There is Korea's greatest help in a bitter present, her greatest hope for a better tomorrow!

In the most diverse circumstances, in every part of the world, and at every level of cultural and political advance—as the civilizing agency for a whole people, as in Fiji; as the only mediator of healing, learning, morality, spiritual ideals amid tribe after tribe of primitive folk; as chief source of leadership for public service among a suppressed nation like Korea; as the mightiest single force for the regeneration and emancipation of the most populous of all nations—India and China—the Christian Movement stands forth upon the record of history as a formative influence of quite incalculable dimensions.

3. *The Christian Church is a factor within the world of nations.*

It is important to face to the full what the Church *cannot* accomplish. Clearly, it is not yet able to prevent war even though it should engulf all humanity. That is partly because, though men talk of "Christian nations" and "Christian civilization," Christian Faith has furnished only a thin veneer upon the selfishness and brutality of national policies; in every nation, real Christians are still a small and struggling minority. It is partly because Christians themselves, while committed to the ideal of international order, are not yet converted to paying the price for its realization either through their own sacrifices or through the sacrifices of their respective nations. It is partly because the Church is not, and should never be, a political agency; it cannot and must not employ the measures that could halt dictators or assure the speedy triumph of peace and right in a world so largely under the rule of naked force.

On the other hand, it is equally important to recognize what the Christian Movement is doing.

The leadership of Protestant and Orthodox Christendom has been steadily drawing together in deeper and more effective unity. This has been taking place at pre-

cisely the time when the nations were being torn asunder by the most powerful centrifugal forces of passion and unreason in modern history. Here is decisive refutation of the charge that the Church is merely a reflection of secular culture. At the very moment when mankind was being swept into armed camps and the last pretense of world unity and world culture was being shattered, the Christian churches (excepting always the Church of Rome) were coming into the closest unity of thought and fellowship —and even organization—that had existed in a thousand years.

These developments find their climax in the formation of the World Council of Churches which already embraces the greater part of Protestant Christendom and which will speak and act within assigned limits in behalf of the whole non-Roman World Christian Movement.

The Christian Movement is preparing leadership for the better day that may lie beyond the darkness of this hour. In every nation it is raising up men and women committed to the achievement of world peace, fully cognizant of the conditions of national sacrifice by which alone it might be realized, and deeply schooled in the reality of World Community through membership in the World Church. *It is the only agency that is raising up world-minded leadership throughout the world.*

As I have elsewhere written:

> Christianity has become at last a world movement; that Movement is today the only living, growing, powerful world movement.
>
> The Christian Church has become a Universal Church; that Church is today the only true World Community.

In our shattered and confused and apprehensive world, there now remains one and only one unshattered, undaunted, resolute world community of men and women:

it is the world-wide movement of Protestant and Orthodox Christendom.[7]

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A contemporary apologist for the Church quotes Pericles' plea in behalf of Athens, "Think what she *may become* and be worthy of her." With equal appropriateness, it might be said, "Think what the Church *has been,* and *is,* and be worthy of her."

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[7] We shall return to a further examination of "The Christian Movement in Today's World" in Chapter Eleven.

CHAPTER SIX

Obstacles to Belief—Evil

WE HAVE ALREADY suggested that most of the doubt about religious beliefs which flits across our minds is not at its roots genuine intellectual difficulty at all but is due to some other cause, although an element of true skepticism is usually present. Sometimes it is "an attitude of intellectual adventure with a mental equipment altogether inadequate for the task." Sometimes it is due to a misconception of what religious belief is supposed to be and do—the expectation of an absolute and final certainty which can leave no room for question. Sometimes it is the failure to think through difficulties as they appear. Sometimes it is the fluctuation of passing moods. Sometimes it is skepticism without the intellectual or moral earnestness which alone would make solution possible. Sometimes it is "a place of refuge from an uncomfortable moral challenge." Most of all, it is some maladjustment within the life of the doubter, some disharmony of that life with the lives of his fellows and of God, which makes the whole world appear disjointed and meaningless, and faith impossible. If we could straighten out the inner lives of people, we could solve well over ninety per cent of their intellectual difficulties with respect to religion.

That does not mean that there are no genuine intellec-

tual puzzles for religious faith. It means that most of us, blatant doubters though we be, have never gone far enough in our thinking or our living to enter those chambers where real difficulty begins. However, to some of us doubt *is* a real problem; with many of us it hovers like a specter; all of us, if we take religion in earnest, will be confronted by it at times of severe testing, and we need to be prepared. So I want to face with you the real obstacles to faith and how we should meet them.

II

At the very outset let us remind ourselves that the greatest obstacles lie not where we sometimes pretend they do—not in the immensity of the universe or in the apparent mechanism of its operation, not in the teachings of modern psychology or in the skeptical implications of philosophy, not even in the tragedy of the World Wars. Our real difficulties lie in the hard facts of experience which life brings to each of us, personally.

Here is a young life which seems to hold unusual promise for the future—a junior in college, let us say, gifted with outstanding intellectual ability, popular with everyone, a constructive influence in college life, a successful career assured, the pride of his whole family who have wrapped up in him their interest and their expectation. He is snapped off suddenly—a typhoid germ or an auto accident. The life is gone, the family is destitute of hope and interest, the world has lost a leader it sorely needed. How can one justify it? What can be the purpose of that? Almost the only case of pure intellectual difficulty among college men and women which I have ever met had a cause much like that. A brother in whom the family's hopes had been centered was suddenly taken by pneumonia, without warning or apparent reason. His sister, ill-

prepared in her youthfulness for the shock of loss, poured out the bitterness of her heart in these lines:

> The Gods, they live on Mt. Olympia
> In regal state.
> While men below in common life,
> Are slaves to fate.
> The Gods surrounded by the comfort
> That luxury affords—
> And men toil on in misery
> Forgotten by their Lords.

This is not classic poetry, but it is the spontaneous cry of a deeply troubled spirit.

Or, here is a young woman of quite extraordinary brilliance of intellect and beauty of spirit. A high honor graduate in mathematics from one of the leading woman's colleges, she went on to theological seminary to prepare for a life of service through the Church. There, likewise, she not only stood unfailingly at the head of her class, but was also universally revered as one of the strongest and most contagious spiritual influences which that seminary had known in a generation. Estopped from ordination in her own denomination, she preached frequently and with marked effectiveness in church and college pulpits. "The Maude Royden of America," she was sometimes called. The most radiant and impressive Christian leader of her generation, it was said. When she was already mature and engrossed in a thousand worth-while undertakings, a strong and beautiful love came to her. She was married with transcendent happiness. Then, toward the end of her wedding journey, meningitis struck her down. In three or four days she was gone. Six weeks to a day from her wedding, the friends who had escorted her to the altar as ushers bore her coffin down the same aisle for the funeral service. How can we justify that?

It is not alone the personal loss in the taking of such a life, but the world's loss. This was part of the perplexity

which drove Tennyson to the "honest" doubt which fought its way through to the triumphant faith of "In Memoriam"—that a life with the promise of his young friend Arthur Hallam should have been taken away.

> So many worlds, so much to do.
> So little done; such things to be.

Or, again, here is a life once strong and useful and self-reliant, but now become old and feeble and decrepit, the fullness of the faculties gone, memory of the past and interest in the future alike dead, possibly destined to drag on year after year in an institution for the aged—a life eager to go, yet held on interminably, it seems. What meaning can there be in that?

Or, perhaps needless and purposeless suffering confronts us—a life which never knows an instant free from harrowing pain, or a child doomed permanently to invalidism through a parent's sin or a physician's carelessness. Or, in some ways worse, a delicate and tender nature forced to live with a coarse spirit which wounds it with every word.

Or, it may be simply the apparent futility of life itself which is most likely to strike us. Effort brings no success, virtue brings no reward, sacrifice brings no recognition. Life is perverse, unreasonable, cruel. What is the use? Is there any meaning in it? Is it worth while?

Let us understand at once that Christian faith makes no attempt to give a final answer to these perplexities. It is of the very nature of that faith's reply that, after all that can be said in explanation has been said, there still remain unanswered questions. Indeed, whenever we pause to think the matter out quietly, we realize that we do not need a *complete* explanation of evil. We require two things: (1) so much understanding of the reason for evil as shall enable us to give ourselves without reserve to

mastering it; and (2) the assurance that it is possible to achieve a practical conquest of evil.

III

Religion does point to the following considerations to help us toward an answer to the perplexity of suffering:

1. *There must be the possibility of evil in a world in which there is to be the possibility of good.* Many people never feel the power of that fact. But it is true of all of life. There can be no light unless there be the possibility of darkness. There could be no beauty were there not ugliness to make beauty real. Likewise, in a world of moral freedom, a world which has any moral meaning at all, there can be no such thing as virtue in the life of any person unless in that life there lies ever present the possibility of vice. There can be no such thing as character save it be the conquest of, and freedom from, sin. A world without evil would be heaven. But a world without the possibility of evil would be worse than hell; for such a world would take from life all meaning whatsoever and leave us colorless, purposeless, amoral automatons. That means that evil is a necessity, you say? No; but it means that the *possibility* of evil is a necessity. And in a world where men are struggling for the achievement of character, it does practically result in evil.

This fact aids considerably in answering our problem. It is not enough merely to complain of suffering. To overthrow faith because of evil, you must actually be able to conceive of a world which, taking it as a whole and recognizing fully the incalculable price we pay for man's freedom, would be better than our world. Carping criticism is easy; constructive criticism is another matter. When suffering strikes us with its cruelty and irrationality, we are quick enough to cry that God should have made a

better world; but when it is asked *how* he could have made the world better and still preserve to us the freedom which makes us men, we are silent. The more one ponders this old world of ours, the less is one inclined to suggest improvements.

2. In the second place, *it is equally important to mark out clearly what "evil" is*—that is, what types and instances of pain, suffering, disappointment, frustration, sin, demand explanation. Not all these experiences constitute "evil." One would suppose that to be so obvious as to make notation of it superfluous. But it is amazing how many persons who discuss glibly the problem of evil have never grasped this elementary truth.

For example, pain in itself is by no means an evil. We are not to think, as is so generally done, of pain and pleasure as plus and minus quantities, standing at opposite poles of the gamut of experience. On the contrary, they are often inseparable. They stand together within a single experience so intimately that they are almost indistinguishable. A commonplace example is the giving of an important address. Here, as every public speaker knows, it is sometimes impossible to tell whether pain or pleasure predominates. What holds in so obvious an instance is a law of life, true of every type of creative labor whatsoever —it is a strange amalgam of intense agony and keen joy. It seems to point beyond itself toward some higher experience which shall include both pleasure and pain and yet transcend them both.[1] Here childbirth is the supreme instance; but it is representative of the whole burden of creation. This is sufficient to indicate how absurd it is to think of pain, as such, as evil. In the familiar words which George Eliot put in the mouth of Romola:

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[1] See the illuminating discussion of this fact in Bernard Bosanquet, *The Value and Destiny of the Individual* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), *Lecture VI.*

We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts, and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we should choose before anything else, because our souls see it is good.

Moreover, the experience of pain is one of the conditions of selfhood, of man's status as a free, responsible, and growing personality. It is part of the price—an inevitable price which the free man gladly pays—of our destiny as finite and fallible creatures straining toward perfection. There is no progress without suffering. It is this fact which gives the final lie to all hedonistic philosophies, attempts to measure the goodness of life in terms of its gift of pleasure. By the same token, it may give ground for pause to much modern psychological and educational theory with its emphasis upon "complete adjustment," "complete integration," personal satisfaction, the elimination of strain and suffering, as criteria of the good life.

Our earlier discussion has portrayed human life as enveloped at every moment by higher and higher levels of reality—the Supernatural—which forever summon us to reach upward in the effort to achieve them. We reach and climb, but always with effort, pain, struggle. We attain, but only to find another range beyond. And so onward and upward, endlessly. Forever the Supernatural intrigues and calls us. Indeed, this tension between that which we have appropriated and the Supernatural always beyond our grasp is a key to the meaning of life. But, being tension, it is resolved only with pain. "Complete adjustment" can mean only one thing—adjustment to the *status quo*. It is possible, but it is the death of the soul. The richest personality is no easily won integration, attained without effort or strain, but an achievement reached over a pathway scarred with suffering and failure. Even in it-

self, it is less akin to blissful peace than to happiness streaked with pain. It is joy shining through tears.

> Peace does not mean the end of all our striving;
> Joy does not mean the drying of our tears.
> Peace is the power that comes to souls arriving
> Up to the light where God himself appears.[2]

Not only is pain an inevitable feature of advancing manhood, and with difficulty distinguished from pleasure in creative endeavor. Almost invariably it is present in connection with life's highest moments. The profoundest and most valued meanings of life are seldom revealed except in the setting of pain. Here, also, the most familiar and unchallengeable illustration is the agony of childbirth; but less striking instances pepper the come and go of daily life.

We may go a step further. Not only do strain and suffering nearly always precede or accompany life's richest and most exalted experiences. They appear to stand in some sort of direct ratio to the maturity and quality of men's spiritual apprehension. Pain increases as man advances; it is the great spirits, most sensitive to wrong, who suffer most. And, by the same token, difficulties of belief are not the characteristic of the superficial but of the profound mind, not of those who have skimmed the surface of religion but of those who have sought to plumb its greatest depths. In a masterly delineation of the prophet Habakkuk, Sir George Adam Smith says:

> He illustrates the great commonplace of religious doubt, that problems arise and become rigorous in proportion to the purity and tenderness of a man's conception of God. It is not the coarsest but the finest temperaments which are exposed to scepticism. Every advance in assurance of God or in appreciation of his character develops new perplexities in face of the

[2] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, "The Suffering God," *Rough Rhymes of a Padre,* Willie Woodbine, Ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918).

facts of experience, and faith becomes her own most cruel troubler.[3]

No, not all of life's tragedy presents a theoretical problem. It will be discovered that the kinds of pain which do furnish baffling perplexity for the earnest mind are two: those which are not due to man's willful wrongdoing and are not implicit in his finite destiny (for example, natural disaster and disease); and those of whatever origin which not even the power of Christian faith seems able to transmute to positive gain (for example, insanity, inherited mental deficiency, and certain features of senility). That suffering is evil for which man bears no responsibility and which he cannot redeem.

3. Then we must recognize that *most, but not all, of the suffering of life is due to man's failure somewhere*—not necessarily immediately, but ultimately, if we trace back the evil to its true source. It is partly the price we pay for the adventure of learning—the fact that our humanity has not yet attained maturity but is in the process of attainment. We are still children, only a few short stages removed from our brute ancestors, and some of our suffering is the racial experience of the child's blundering freedom. It is the growing pains of humanity; and such suffering carries no blame.

But much suffering is due to the deliberate or careless failure which is sin. It has been failure to respect the laws of health; or a foolish choice in youth; or the willful mistake of one of our ancestors, possibly far, far back. Often it is difficult to locate the blame, but almost always it can be traced to someone's sin or mistake somewhere.

We may call this the social view of sin. It is only another and arresting proof that we are all brothers together. It is certain that we shall reach no adequate understanding of

[3] *The Twelve Minor Prophets,* George Adam Smith (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), Vol. II, p. 136.

evil until we learn to think of mankind as a unity, not only in this generation but in the interconnection of ourselves with all generations which have gone before and which will follow after. A generation whose existence is overshadowed by the reality of "World War" should require no proof of this fact and no illustration beyond the all too obvious interlocking of the fate of all people in a common destiny. It is true that the sins of the fathers issue in the suffering of the third and fourth generations and in ways more intricate than we yet comprehend. This is as necessary as that there should be the possibility of evil if there is to be goodness. In a world which was made to be a fellowship of comrades, it is absolutely inevitable that the sin of one should throw its curse on all the others. In a profound sense, mankind must be saved together or it cannot be saved at all; complete individual salvation is a myth.

4. Religion points to one further fact concerning evil—not only that there must be the possibility of evil if there is to be the possibility of good, but also that *right out of the heart of evil itself great good may and often does come.* This is perhaps the most significant of life's many paradoxes. It is as though out of some noxious spring the purest water flowed; as though from a venomous bite came the most robust health. A friend of mine was once crossing the Atlantic with a chemist whose field of experimentation was the manufacture of artificial perfumes. As they were standing by the rail one day, he asked my friend to close his eyes and held beneath his nose a small vial. "What do you smell?" he asked. "The most fragrant lilies of the valley I have ever known," replied my friend. "No," said the chemist, "what you are smelling is camphor balls." Out of a particularly commonplace household article he had made a rare perfume. Something like that men have ever been doing with the experience of

evil. As a matter of fact, history shows that the noblest spirits have been souls turned forth from the white heat of the furnace of suffering. And the great proof of it is the supreme paradox of history—that from the most dastardly feat of evil man has ever committed, the crucifixion of Jesus, there has flowed into the world's life the greatest power to redeem mankind and banish evil. It is as though evil, when it is too insufferable, becomes its own undoing. It was so in the Cross of Jesus. This is the final proof that, in spite of all superficial evidence to the contrary, our world is in the ultimate control of the goodness of God.

The great souls of the ages have seen this. These lines were found scribbled on the walls of a hospital room beside a bed where unusual suffering had taken place.

The cry of man's anguish went up to God
"Lord, take away pain!
The shadow that darkens the world Thou hast made,
The close-coiling chain
That strangles the heart; the burden that weighs
On the wings that should soar—
Lord, take away pain from the world Thou hast made
That it love Thee the more!"

Then answered the Lord to the cry of the world,
"Shall I take away pain,
And with it the power of the soul to endure,
Made strong by the strain?
Shall I take away pity that knits heart to heart
And sacrifice high?
Will ye lose all your heroes that lift from the fire
White brows to the sky?
Shall I take away love that redeems with a price
And smiles at its loss?
Can ye spare from your lives that would cling unto mine
The Christ on his cross?"

This does not mean that good always comes of evil. It means that good, some good, always *may* come of evil.

5. Thus we are led to a final insight; and the most important of all. It is a commonplace of spiritual history that *evil is not the same reality to those who observe it as spectators and to those who know its harrowing impact in their own lives.* I believe it is true to say (and if it *is* true, it is supremely significant) that it has not been the great sufferers who have been most bereft of faith by the facts of evil, but their friends; not those who have known the agony of suffering from within, but those who have observed the injustice of suffering from without.

From a very modern person who had known the prick of evil's barb to the full comes this testimony:

> That which we suffer ourselves has no longer the same air of monstrous injustice and wanton cruelty that suffering wears when we see it in the case of others.[4]

This was the verdict of a man of rare genius "whose whole life was a battle with disease and suffering, but who did his life's work with high courage and in serenity of soul." How often it is true that, in the face of some great personal trial, a man's practice far exceeds his creed. In his life he demonstrates a greater faith than his mind has found it possible to accept. Likewise, it is generally true that we are better able to solve our own problem of suffering than that of others. Those who agonize most over the world's ills are usually those whose experience of the matter is, at most, vicarious. When we are merely onlookers of the sum of human tragedy and misery, its burden is intolerable; but when we are called upon to endure our own portion of that burden, we can manage it.

However, suffering actually occurs, has its reality, not in the general experience of humanity but in this and that instance in individual lives. It is here that it is to be met; and, by that token, it is from the actual meeting of it in

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[4] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Letters* (1899), Vol. I, p. 370.

personal experience, and there alone, that it is rightly to be viewed. The only deeply revealing light we ever get on this most baffling of all problems is through the testimony of those who have suffered greatly.

IV

Such light as we have been able to discover on the problem of evil may be summarized in these statements:

1. Pain, as such, is not evil. Indeed some pain seems to be invariably present in all of our most significant experiences.

2. Pain and pleasure are not antipodal. Rather they stand as inseparable and almost indistinguishable elements in life's greatest moments.

3. There must be the possibility of evil in a world where there is to be the possibility of good.

4. Most evil is due to man's sin against his fellow man; this is implicit in a social world.

5. Consciousness of evil increases with increased spiritual sensitivity. By the same token, genuine perplexity for faith increases with increased spiritual discernment.

6. Suffering is a reality of interior personal experience; and it may be truly viewed only in that perspective. But it is precisely those who experience suffering thus who are able to triumph over it and find place for it within a positive faith.

Reflection *can* cast light, valuable light, on the problem of evil. It shows that by no means all pain and suffering are evil at all. It discovers that a very large portion of the evil in human experience is inevitable in a world

whose purpose is not the provision of easy satisfactions for men but rather their growth in moral stature and the service of high purposes by those who are free to follow or refuse the higher path. It reveals that most evil is due to human wrongdoing or choice of the lower course, and is part of humanity's price for the gift of freedom and the adventure of autonomous selfhood. It shows, further, that, if it is not only moral individuals but an ethical society which is to be achieved, then it is necessary that the failure of one should scar the life of many and that each of us in some measure, and some of us in almost unbearable measure, should pay the penalty of sins for which we bear no direct responsibility.

V

Yet all we can say still leaves lingering question marks, vast areas of suffering which seem irrational, inexcusable. Just when we think our minds are satisfied, some peculiarly grievous case of the injustice of evil presses home upon us and we revolt against it all. I remember hearing Maude Royden say once, "I never try to explain evil. When people ask me for an explanation of suffering, I tell them that I have none. But I tell them that I have a power which can conquer suffering." Another, speaking as a philosopher, has said much the same thing:

> Christianity has not explained suffering and evil; no one has done so; no one can do so. Yet Christianity has done two things greater, more profound, and profitable for us. Christianity has, from the first, immensely deepened and widened the fact, the reality, the awful potency, and baffling mystery of sorrow, pain, sin, things which abide with man across the ages. And Christianity has from the first immensely increased the capacity, the wondrous secret and force, which issues in a practical, living, loving transcendence, utilization, transfor-

mation of sorrow and pain, and even of sin. . . . Christianity gave to souls the faith and strength to grasp life's nettle.[5]

In this matter, as in all basic religious questions, the finally convincing evidence is to be discovered in lives which have themselves conquered—what evil does to those who meet it in the confidence of faith. And nowhere else. The witness of that evidence is that, in the hour when the religious soul finds itself most oppressed by life's injustice, mankind's cruelty or fate's frustration, it finds its strength in a comradeship which does not explain but confirm. Then is it most sure of God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The conclusive reply *is* faith's defiance of evil.

Christianity's final word is this: there is no such thing as harm from evil to the true soul, the soul which knows God. To it, evil is the very instrument by which that soul's own noblest life shall come. There is a single verse in St. Paul's letters, which is among the most profound he ever wrote: "To those who love God, all things work together for good" (Romans 8:20); or, a more accurate translation, "For those who love God, *he* works all things together for good!" All things, *all things!* That is Christianity's final word on the problem of suffering. And that is Christianity's supreme faith. It is a faith which offers no rational explanation of all the perplexity, the injustice, the tragedy of life. It is a faith which points out that much of man's suffering is explicable, possibly inevitable. It is a faith which points to the values that have come into human life through suffering. But it is a faith which confesses its inability to tell the whole story. It is a faith which, granting the limitations of its knowledge, raises its head in triumphant confidence and proclaims, with a certainty that brooks no denying, that over the soul which

[5] Baron von Hügel, *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1921), Vol. I, p. 110ff.

loves God, the soul which is earnestly set to live its life in fullest service, evil has absolutely no power, that to that soul every experience which life may bring—perplexity, disappointment, separation, sorrow, pain, death itself—everything works together for *good*. That is the heart of the Christian faith. That is its final insight into the meaning of life.

VI

Thus we see that the most competent and wise and thorough explanation of evil fails at the crucial point. It points beyond itself—to religious experience, the soul's personal mastery of evil through faith. Whether we regard the facts of evil as ultimately harmonizable with a theistic view of the world will depend at the last on one point and one point only—the significance we attach to the religious soul's practical transcendence of evil within its own experience.

Of the fact that the religious man *can* conquer evil, and wring from it otherwise unknown values, we have abundant evidence. The pages of biography are filled with such conquests. The Cross is the supreme illustration, but it is only the clearest proof of what many obscure souls have demonstrated more humbly. Out of evil come insights which otherwise seem hidden, as the words of Romola testify. Out of evil may come character which otherwise seems unattainable, as in the life of Robert Louis Stevenson. Out of evil has come a positive, transforming power for mankind's good which nothing else seems able to generate—notably through the vicarious self-giving of Jesus Christ.

But when men, in facing the problem of evil, have fallen back on the triumphant faith of the great spirits, it has been no easy sentimentalism or cowardly dependence upon others. They have rested on a sound intuition,

grounded in an unrecognized philosophical assumption. What final evidence can we accept as to the ultimate goodness of the universe? What is an adequate test? Surely, what it does to those whom we recognize as its noblest spirits. To believe in the goodness of God and his world, we do not require to believe in a natural order which metes out measured justice to all men. We require to believe in a world where the noblest men can achieve freedom, and in the triumph of the spirit over even-handed justice and nice rewards. We need to discover a world where the bravest souls win the noblest character, and the deepest realization within their own consciousness of the victory over life. Such a world ours is.

Thus our final question is, Shall we trust the certainty of the great sufferers, of those who have known evil most intimately within their own experience, and yet whose spirits have risen above it in triumph?

In the end we are forced to a choice between two alternative positions. One holds that whatever Ultimate Reality there may be is indifferent to man's welfare and the triumph of man's highest values. The other maintains that, though much is inexplicable, there is adequate support for its faith that Ultimate Reality is good and intimately solicitous for man and his ideals. The first issues in the philosophy of noble resignation; the second in a reasoned religious faith. Both may sustain lives of nobility, of high character, of great devotion. Each man must make his choice between them as he is given wisdom and a sound instinct.

VII

This brings our discussion to the note on which I would wish to have it conclude—the necessity, the centrality of faith in the fullest religious life.

There is evidence for God in the order and beauty and

progress of nature—evidence which at times seems almost incontrovertible. The universe does point to God. But it does not point unmistakably to the God religious experience needs. Its evidence is never unqualified, never wholly adequate. Just when we are most secure, some instance of the stark cruelty or impersonality of nature, or, more probably, some peculiarly flagrant example of the injustice of life comes upon us. And belief is overlaid with great question marks. The evidence for a God of love is great; it is never wholly convincing.

Likewise, there is light to be discovered on the injustice and disappointments and frustration which life thrusts upon us—the instances of evil which are so difficult to understand and more difficult to endure. Sit down quietly with the facts, seek perspective, a whole view of things, and it is possible to see why many of these tragedies must be. But the explanation is never completely reassuring. And even when explanation has done its best, there remains an uncatalogued residuum to tantalize the honest mind and harry the sensitive spirit. There is light, but no clear vision. The evidence is helpful, but never wholly satisfying.

Again, as we shall note more fully in our last chapter, when we confront the supreme mystery of existence and see one whom we value highly pass beyond this life, here, too, the evidence for the life beyond is not wanting. But to the sensitive and acute mind, there are very serious difficulties. The proof is persuasive, but it is far, far from complete. At the last word, if we believe in immortality, we move out not in spite of proof, but beyond proof. We trust, by faith.

In this sense, Christian faith is inevitably, incurably more than rational. But it is also consciously, deliberately, convincedly more than rational. It believes that there are rational reasons why any true religion must of necessity be so. Naïve Christianity has often claimed to furnish reli-

gious certainty clearly deducible from the obvious facts of experience. Profound religion has seldom made that claim. Christianity faces frankly life's apparent irrationality; or, at least, the apparent indifference of the universe to the soul's deepest concerns. It appeals from an apparent irrationality to what it conceives to be a higher though less obvious rationality—an order of things which must appear unreasonable in order that character may be self-achieved and faith genuine. It appeals to its insight that a truly moral world must be so.

For a world which meted out even-handed justice would be a world in which virtue and prudence would be identical; therefore, a world unsuited for the achievement of character. A world in which God stood at the street corners of life so that none might miss him would be a world in which religious belief would be equivalent to worldly wisdom; therefore, a world ill-suited for the adventure of true religion. To that degree, our world must appear irrational.

Ours is a world in which thorough assurance of its reasonableness is possible only for those who strive to make it reasonable; only in the living experience of that attempt. Ours is a world in which vital religion can be realized only through faith. And, if at times our logical faculties, our passion for realism, raise protest against the seeming unreasonableness of such a world, they are silenced by the central temper of our spirits which recognize that it is precisely in such a world that we would choose to live. Only in such a world can courage achieve character and faith make belief secure. It is this which marks the religious from the purely secular life, its faith—confidence in insights believed to be true but never wholly proved true; courage to launch forth upon a pathway never fully seen, in devotion to goals believed to be achievable but never completely achieved. For its most persuasive commendation to the man who does not possess it, Chris-

tianity depends upon the witness of the inner life of those who, through its power, have triumphed. But for the final confirmation which alone can render its certainties fully secure, it must wait upon each man's venture of faith through which the Eternal Presence may make himself real to that man's soul.

THE LIVING OF LIFE

The Starting Point —Moral Earnestness
Power for Life—Fellowship with God
Power for Life—Worship
Power for Life—Service
The Christian Movement in Today's World

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Starting Point—Moral Earnestness

HERETOFORE WE HAVE been thinking almost entirely about matters of belief. What shall we think about this life of ours, about this universe in which we find ourselves? What may we honestly and intelligently believe about God? What attitude should we take toward Jesus; what is the meaning of Christ for the modern man? What of the Church? How shall we face the experiences of life which make belief difficult? But, as we said at the outset, man's interest in religion has always been a twofold one. He has asked not only light on life's meaning, but also power for life's living. The second demand has been the more earnest, the more insistent, the more significant. It is with this problem of the living of life, the mastery of life, that we shall be concerned from now on.

II

It is characteristic of discussions of religion to conclude with the question of power. I have never known a conference of college students to draw to its close without an urgent request for an address on "the sources of power."

As has been suggested earlier, our final query in matters religious is not "what?" or "why?" but "how?" Whenever we are most honest, we recognize that our knowledge

far outruns our practice. The most earnest and pressing query of our spirits is not "What should I believe?" or "What should I do?" or even "Why should I so live?" but "How *can* I live as I know I should?" Men's most urgent demand of religion concerns the way to greater power.

Further, a persistent inner feeling suggests that our lives are capable of far greater power than they now possess. Most of us live constantly under the sense of genuine but unfulfilled possibilities. Hence, rather than from the cruelty of life or the impersonality of Nature, arises the sad melancholy tinged with cynicism which shadows many spirits. To be sure, some of our expectations of life are quite unreal, the chimerical dreams of youth. We are better rid of them, however painful the process. But of others a deep intuition tells us that it is not so. They represent truth, our real selves, the divine purpose for us. An eminent psychologist states his conviction "that we are living far below the limits of our possible selves, and that there are open to us resources of power available through the right use of our instincts which, if directed to noble purposes, will free our minds from these worries, anxieties, and morbid fatigues which spoil our lives, and will free us for a life of energy and strength." [1] The experience of the great Christians is proof positive that within the life of religion there are latent and available riches of vision and strength beyond anything we normally know. And so the life of many is haunted by the vague sense of what life could and should be. We long for such an increment of power beyond our present achievement.

III

To all such inquiries, two answers are given, apparently contradictory but each in some sense true. On the one

[1] J. A. Hadfield, *The Psychology of Power* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), p. 52.

hand, we are told that no power is to be found apart from the natural and normal processes of life. The power we seek is already within us: it is to be won by no appeal to supernatural agency or dependence upon mysterious or extrahuman resources; all the power which is available will come through our habitual life and work. But a second voice no less confidently makes reply: at every moment of our lives there is possible for us power far beyond our own capacities; the power we need is outside us; it must come from beyond in a unique and quite definite way.

The issue is largely unreal. Whether the power we seek is released from within or comes as an incursion from without makes little difference; the point is that it is something beyond our present lives, beyond the self-of-the-moment. We turn to religion for resources—call them supernatural or supernormal or what you will. Clearly they are superusual, far beyond the possession of our present experience.

But, first of all, two preliminary words deserve underscoring. It is clear that resources should never be sought for their own sake, apart from some specific purpose. Therefore, it is exceedingly important to know precisely what we seek. The *way to power* will vary according to the *kind of power* we wish. And the kind of power will depend upon the particular need we are set to meet. The scholar preparing a report of far-reaching scientific import needs the maximum resource available, but the power he needs is of intellectual concentration, of heightened insight, of cool and impersonal thought. The young person confused in purpose, pulled here and there by impulses he is not able to weigh or interpret, needs the maximum resource available, but the power he needs may be the guidance of common-sense wisdom, restraint rather than release, not increase but direction of the already superabundant energies of life. The derelict on the Bow-

ery, personality in fragments, impotent to muster an ounce of energy in his own behalf, who drifts half-crazed with drink into a Rescue Mission, desperately needs power but of a far different order than the others. The way to power depends upon the kind of power we need.

One further word by way of preface—a twofold warning. *We can never judge power in ourselves by an external or easy standard, especially by how we feel.* Frequently we are the poorest judges of the worth of our own lives. And the "feelings" of religion are notoriously deceptive. How often we turn from high exaltation, when we have seemed to sense the power of religion coursing through us, to become impatient, irritable, flagrantly blind to another's need! How often, when the resources of life seemed to ebb meager and turgid, we have discovered long afterward that virtue flowed from us quite beyond our own best abilities! And, *we cannot judge power in ourselves by the opinion of others.* Surely, the judgment of the contemporary world on the failure of Jesus should be sufficient reminder that there may be no more deceptive guide than the praise or blame of others. The healing of the finest influence—the kind of resource we most desire for our life—works its way too subtly for casual apprehension or easy measurement.

In our search for the meaning of life, we first laid down certain conditions for the quest, prior conditions which must be fulfilled for good hope of successful outcome.

Likewise, in this more vital and urgent matter of resources for living, there is one inescapable precondition. It is the same precondition as the climactic prerequisite for the understanding of life—*moral earnestness.*

IV

A few years ago, four recent graduates of one of our eastern universities were seated in their university club

in New York City on a winter Sunday afternoon. Three of them happened to be keenly interested in religion. They were discussing the moral health of their college, the work of the Christian Association, some of the ethical concerns of the campus. The fourth was a typical college graduate. He sat, slunk down in a heavily upholstered chair, his eyes half closed, his feet on the warm radiator, a cigarette hanging from one corner of his mouth, the Sunday newspaper spread across his lap with the comic section on top. Obviously he was bored by their conversation. Finally, as their talk grew more spirited and shifted from the moral concerns of that college to the moral problems of the world in the day in which we live, he pulled his feet down from the radiator, dropped his cigarette into a waiting ashtray, stretched, and, as he sauntered off for a game of Sunday afternoon bridge with some friends, dropped this remark as his summary of their conversation, "Well, what difference does it make anyway?"

That incident is important for two insights which it gives us. First of all, as a criticism of the kind of religion many Christians have—a religion so colorless, so innocuous, that to the casual observer it seems to make no difference at all. You may be sure of one thing: that is not genuine Christianity. Whatever else we may say for it, wherever Christianity has been real from the days of the Early Church down to the present, it has always made a difference—one so great that he who runs may note.

But the incident is important, in the second place, as an insight into the moral attitude of the speaker—an attitude which can best be described as moral neutrality. There was nothing especially the matter with that man. He was a good fellow. (As someone has said, "He was good; but good for nothing in particular.") Quite probably, he will never bring disgrace upon himself, his family, or his university. He might be considered a very reputable and representative alumnus. But when it comes to a down-

right moral issue of any kind, his attitude is one of strict neutrality: "Well, what difference does it make anyway?"

We said his attitude was that of a typical college graduate. Would it be unfair to say that it is also that of a typical undergraduate—that many of us as college students are most distinguished morally by a certain colorless and innocuous neutrality? Toward those who carry responsibility for moral issues and moral causes, who plan and toil in the burden of organizations and movements which stand for finer, idealistic things, who are struggling to remake the life of the world and the life of the campus, who are giving of themselves day in and day out that individual men and women may find themselves in life—for all these we have a benevolent sympathy, albeit a somewhat condescending sympathy. We feel they must be doing good work; we know they mean well. And to the causes they represent, our attitude is the same. If money is asked for, we may give, perhaps generously, though seldom as much as we will spend on a single prom or a single big-game weekend. If time is asked for, we may give that too, in moderation, though seldom as much as we spend on bridge or teas or bull sessions. But if active support is asked for, if it is suggested that any obligation in these matters rests on us (obligations, for instance, which might involve a difference in the choice of our life-work), especially if criticism arises or there is an issue which forces a lining up on one side or the other—then, consciously or unconsciously, our answer is, "Well, what difference does it make anyway?" Benevolent sympathy, yes. But active partisanship, never! In the pinches we are morally neutral.

V

Now there are only two things to be said about moral neutrality. The first is this: *it is absolutely impossible.*

Harry Emerson Fosdick tells the story of a man who was rowing down the Niagara River past Buffalo. He could not make up his mind whether or not to get off at Buffalo. First he thought he would; then he thought he wouldn't. He was undecided. Ultimately he awoke at the foot of Niagara Falls to discover that he had decided not to get off at Buffalo. He had decided by indecision.

And so it is with life. Life, on our college campus or in the world, is no static affair, no placid lake of moral negativeness upon which we can float in complacent indifference—benevolent in spirit toward all men and all causes, courageous in action for no man and no cause. Life is dynamic. Whether we recognize it or not, you and I live in a world which is teeming with moral problems, a world in which great issues are being fought out every hour of the day, in which great wrongs cry for righting, great problems struggle for solution, men and women and little children yearn inarticulately for freedom and life which should be theirs. "Truth forever on the scaffold; Wrong forever on the throne." To be sure, we may be deliberately or carelessly blind to these facts if we choose. But that *is* the world in which we live. In such a world there can be no such thing as moral neutrality.

As our friend in the university club spoke, three pictures came vividly to the mind of one of his companions. The first is a scene not four hundred yards from where they sat. It is a small, dingy tenement room, typical of hundreds of thousands which line the East Side of New York City—less than half a mile from the luxurious Park Avenue and Fifth Avenue palaces which are called apartment houses. There are two other rooms, somewhat smaller and darker. The family numbers seven. In one corner, seated on a rickety cot, is a girl of nineteen, dressed entirely in black, her face and lips tastily painted, on her face the defiant surliness of the girl of the street. She earns only twenty-five dollars a week, selling fifty-

dollar hats in a Fifth Avenue millinery shop; but she spends more than that on herself and her clothes and her pleasures. Beside her is a younger sister who is also on the streets, but not through deliberate waywardness; for on her face are the unmistakable marks of mental deficiency, the sickly smile so familiar in inmates of girls' reformatories. Then there is a younger boy with the same half-witted expression. On the floor are two clear-eyed, bright-faced youngsters, untouched as yet by the temptations which have sent their two sisters on the streets. Finally, the mother, a Czechoslovak, a vigorous, self-reliant woman of forty-five. She has brought seven children into the world. She wanted to bring them up as should have been done. But how could she? For twenty-five years, from eight in the morning until five at night she has rolled cigars in a near-by factory, earning enough for the family to live on. Every spare hour of early morning and late evening is filled with the incessant round of cooking, washing, ironing, cleaning, sewing. Now she faces two daughters who have gone astray, beyond the reach of a love which would have sacrificed itself to save them; for behind the rugged exterior there is a rare maternal tenderness (far more, I fear, than our friend knows in his Park Avenue home). And, on the floor, two others—just as the two eldest were ten years ago. What about their future? There is only one plea the woman has to make—cannot something be done to save these from the ruin in which the others are already enmeshed?

That is not an extreme picture. It could be duplicated by the hundreds in New York City alone, and in every great city of the land. And it is important primarily not as a picture. It is important as a symbol, a symbol of a society riddled with problems demanding solution, of a social system permeated with injustice—above all, a symbol of downright human need. "Well, what difference does it make anyway?" In a world where such need and

such problems exist, there is no such thing as moral neutrality.

The second picture is a scene familiar to many of us. It is a corner of a field somewhere in Europe. On all sides are jagged tree stumps. The ground as far as the eye can see is seared and torn. There is débris everywhere—strings of barbed wire, twisted bits of track, gun carriages, empty shells, bent bayonets, everything. Here and there is a fragment of a wall—once a farmhouse or a factory or a village church. And then, scattered all through the underbrush and tree stumps and débris, little, crude wooden crosses—some white, and some black for the enemy dead, the white and the black all mixed in together. There was a tragic pathos in that indiscriminate intermingling of the black and the white crosses on the battlefields, where the dead of the opposing armies lay side by side, as though mocking in their silent partnership in death those who tried to convince them they were enemies in life. It is a testimony to the fundamental unreality—aye, futility, of it all.

There is nothing extreme in that picture. It could be duplicated all over Europe and North Africa and Burma and China and the Pacific Islands, to the number of 10,000,000 crosses. And it is important primarily not as a picture. It is important as a symbol—a symbol, of course, of millions of lives sacrificed for a great end which has not yet seen fruition, of high ideals professed but never fully realized. It is a symbol, above all, of a world torn with jealousy and suspicion and hatred and fear, of problems to be solved and ideals to be championed, of a humanity to be reconciled. "Well, what difference does it make anyway?" In a world where universal brotherhood continuously struggles to be born, there is no such thing as moral neutrality.

The third picture carries us back, far back—back in

time 1900 years. And far away, past the battlefields of Europe and Africa to Palestine, to a bare hill just outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem where three crosses are set up and three men are being killed by crucifixion—two robbers, and, in the center, one different from the others. And, as a curious crowd passes by on its way into the city, one seems to hear many persons remark in the language of their day, "Well, what difference does it make anyway?" Make no mistake; Jesus Christ was crucified by moral neutrality.

That picture, too, is not important as a single picture. It is important for all it represents—those who have followed after and who have suffered the same annihilation of hopes he knew; the cause he came to proclaim and to advance and for which he died, a cause still alive in the world, still struggling for realization, still seeking defenders, still impeded by a dead weight of benevolent neutrality. *In a world through the heart of which there runs a moral purpose, requiring your co-operation and mine for its fulfillment, there can be no such thing as moral neutrality.* Jesus saw that when he said, "He who is not with me is against me." He whose life is not given deliberately in the defense of right is an abettor of wrong; he whose life is not devoted wholly to the cause of Christ in the world must be numbered among the enemies of Christ.

VI

We said there were two facts about moral neutrality. First, it is absolutely impossible. Second, *it is absolutely unsatisfactory*. We have spoken before of the restlessness which is abroad in the life of youth today. Youth are dissatisfied with everything—with the curriculum, with the leadership of the older generation, with themselves—above all, with life and its opportunities. To satisfy that dissatisfaction, they seek various experiences. They want reality;

by which they mean a kind of crude, primitive realism of undisciplined emotion and uncontrolled ambition. They want release, freedom; by which they mean freedom from restraint and artificial and unreal convention. What they really want, if only they had understanding enough to recognize it, is some center for life which could bring order and unity out of the chaos of living, some leader for life in whose wisdom they could trust, some cause in life into which they could throw themselves completely and, by losing themselves, find the life they seek. In brief, what they really want is, once again, religion; for theirs is an unsatisfactory life which tries to be morally neutral in a morally purposeful universe.

And what of our friend in his university club? As he stood there that Sunday afternoon with sallow complexion and drooping mouth, flabby of muscle, dull of eye, devoid of vigor—and, next to him, one of the most brilliant and popular recent graduates of that same university, a man who shortly afterward left this country to give some years in Christian service in a foreign land and then returned to become headmaster of a leading preparatory school and one of our most popular school and college speakers—erect, vigorous, dynamic, joyous—the contrast between the two men was all the proof needed of how unsatisfactory is the philosophy the indifferent friend represented. The man who is morally indifferent may fool himself into thinking that he is happy. He never fools one who knows the inner lives of college undergraduates. There is within each of us an inextinguishable desire for something better than that. We were made to be partisans—partisans of the weak against the strong, of the higher against the lower, of the right against the wrong, partisans in an eternal moral struggle, partisans of God in the task of establishing his kingdom. Our lives are restless until they find rest in that partisanship.

If ours is a universe of moral purpose, this must be the

starting point in the living of life—the recognition that through all of life (my life and the life of the world) there runs a ceaseless moral struggle. There is no evading it. In the meeting of it with moral earnestness, we begin truly to live. Carlyle was right: there is a basic choice which confronts each one of us, "Wilt thou be a hero or a coward?" That choice each one of us makes for himself.

Life is much like a pathway climbing a steep mountain ascent. If you prefer to live down in the dank marshes or even on the dead level plain, where the overwhelming majority of men and women are perfectly satisfied to go along their unimaginative ways, finding your purpose in life in the making of money or the attainment of social position or the running of organizations, finding your pleasures in the commonplace round of games and parties and dances and dates, feeling no challenge beyond the living of life from day to day, you can do so; and, of course, religion will hold no interest for you. But if you are not satisfied with that, if you want to live life up on the high altitudes where the vision is great and the atmosphere clean and strong and bracing, and the path is steep, the struggle hard, and the way dangerous, if you are dissatisfied with a commonplace existence for your own life and are determined that it shall be something higher, if you are dissatisfied with the lot of your fellow men and are resolved to spend and be spent that their lot may be different, if you are dissatisfied with the world as it is and are prepared to throw *all* of your life for *all* time into the task of remaking it into the beauty of God's kingdom—then you have made life's great fundamental choice; then you have taken the first step toward a full living of life.

> To every man there openeth
> A Way, and Ways, and a Way,
> And the High Soul climbs the High Way,
> And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
> And in between on the misty flats,

The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way and a Low.
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.[2]

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[2] John Oxenham, *Bees in Amber* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, c. 1930).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Power for Life—Fellowship with God

WHEN A MAN COMES face to face with Christ and with a vision of the life Christ believes it possible for him to lead, three things inevitably follow:

First, the experience enormously purifies and elevates his own ideal for himself—his vision of what God expects him to be and what, as a matter of fact, he might become.

Second, it greatly intensifies his realization of how far short he is now falling of a decent approach to what he might be—the littleness and unworthiness and failure of his own life.

Third, it creates in him a great passion to bridge that gap—a passion that the man he is should become that man he has seen so clearly in vision.

> O, that a man would arise in me,
> That the man I am might cease to be.

It is as though two mirrors had been held before him, the one revealing him precisely as he is, the other as he was made to be. From the contrast of those pictures, like the coming together of a positive and a negative pole of electricity, there bursts a flame of desire to become worthy of his heritage. Quite likely it is at that point that a man's need for religion, his desire for power, of which we have spoken so often, first becomes real to him.

It is the thing today to say that a sense of sin has gone out of our modern life. In the measure that that is true, it is only another way of saying that we have lost from our modern world any worthy conception of our own lives. No man can confront the ideal which his parents hold for his life—the ideal which was first conceived, I suppose, in the long days and weeks before his birth, which was fostered all through those trying years of childhood, the measles and the mumps and the first signs of contamination by the crowd and the youthful bravado of smoking and swearing, which was clung to tenaciously through the tense uncertainty of adolescence and early manhood, and which is still held today—no man can confront that ideal and then face the actualities of his own life without there stealing over him a shadowing sense of failure. What matters the praise of the world or the reassurance of friends when all the while in his parents' words, their eyes, and especially their hearts there stands an ideal a thousand times removed from what he now is? The man who so confronts another's hope for him is face to face with life's most redemptive human influence—the transforming power of persistent faith.

How much more true it is when the ideal which has caught hold of us is in the mind of God—God's expectation of us. Then a sense of sin is no unhealthy morbidity, "a hangover from a more primitive religious age, to be discarded in our healthy modern view." The sense of sin is just a frank facing of the sharp facts of life's inescapable contrast—my life as it might be—my life as it now is.

When all this happens to a man, the query which possesses his mind is not "What does it mean to be a Christian?" but "How can I become that man?" He seeks no longer definition but inspiration. "Yes, whenever I am honest with myself, I recognize the difference between right and wrong. I acknowledge the truth of the Christian ideal. I see what I should do; but how can I get myself to

face the right, how can I get myself to live it? I see the life I would live; where shall I get power for this life?"

Quite clearly, we are sensing the need of and searching for something more than ordinary human power. A generation ago, our parents would have said it was for some power outside ourselves, supernatural power. Today many of us shy off from both these expressions. We say we do not understand what is meant by supernatural power, that the power we seek comes from within. There has been altogether too much fuss about the use of these terms. Modern thought may have changed our terms, but it has not altered fundamental human experience. And it is religious experience of which we are speaking. As a matter of fact, it is just as inaccurate to say that that power comes wholly from within as that it comes wholly from without, to say that it is entirely natural as that it is entirely supernatural. What modern thinking has rightly done is to erase what was always an artificial line—the line between the natural and the supernatural, that point where the activity of the human spirit ends and the activity of God begins. The experience of religion remains unchanged. That experience through the ages has been that through religion it is possible to lay hold on power for living which life without religion does not possess. It is in that sense "super" power of some kind; you may call it supernormal or superusual, if you choose.

There can be only one source of that power which we need. It is the more effective linking of our lives with the resources of God. For we must believe that our lives were intended to possess power adequate for their full realization. If they fail to have it, it must be because in some sense they are out of touch with the life of God. The appropriation of that power is not the addition of something new and foreign to our spirits; it is the recovery of something which belongs to them by nature, as robust

health is the natural possession of our physiques. It is the restoration of our lives to spiritual health.

How, then, is that more effective linkage of our lives with the Power of God to be effected? In the same two ways through which we come to know any human friend and so tap the resources of his friendship. By companioning with that friend, talking with him, living with him, through association coming to know his mind and heart, his hopes and his ambitions, his disappointments and his triumphs—through *the fellowship of comradeship.* And through joining that friend in some great task we have in common, laying our energies alongside his and toiling with him, shoulder to shoulder, by day and by night, through success and failure, to the accomplishment of a great undertaking—through *the fellowship of common effort.*

II

A group of undergraduates in a midwestern teachers' college was discussing the hackneyed topic, "What is the matter with religion?" They had picked to pieces with the wisdom of the centuries the Church, the ministry, the creeds, and all the rest. The discussion seemed to make slight progress. Finally, a lad in the front row said with a finality which was obviously intended to settle the matter, "Why, I don't think there is anything the matter with religion. I believe in God. Practically everyone in this room believes in God!" Then the leader of the discussion put two questions. "How many of us in this group believe in God?" Almost every hand went up. "To how many of us in this room is God a living reality?" Scarcely one hesitant hand was raised.

In the contrast of those two questions we draw very close to the nub of our difficulties with religion. They mark the difference between intellectual belief and per-

sonal experience, a difference as wide as the poles. It is the distinction between believing in a person and knowing that person. For some years I had believed in one of the great religious leaders of our country. I had heard him speak from conference platforms many and many a time. I had read his books and pamphlets. Then, one summer, I had the privilege of traveling abroad with him. We worked together, we studied together, we talked together, we played together, we went sightseeing together. Now I *know* that man. We meet the same distinction in the corporate experience of religion—the difference between an academic discussion concerning the nature of God and a living service of corporate worship.

We have spoken repeatedly of the two questions which underlie our interest in religion. The same two questions rise persistently with regard to God. First, "Can I believe in God?" It was this question for which we sought an answer in a previous chapter. It is important that we should do so, for we often fool ourselves into thinking that our lack of genuine Christian faith and life is due to sincere intellectual uncertainty. Even with the best of us, doubt hovers like a specter in the closet. It is well for us to out with it and quash it once for all. I have written at such length along these lines because I believe with all my *mind* that Christianity can stand on its own feet intellectually; indeed, that the Christian explanation of the universe and of life is the only one which ultimately will hold water intellectually. To that question we can reply, with our minds open to every breath of truth which human knowledge and human experience can bring, a confident "Yes."

But even when you have a foolproof intellectual substantiation of Christianity, you have a cold skeleton, a hollow framework, in your hands. Because religion is a living thing and concerned with living life, what men want is not a conviction about God; what they really want is an

experience of God. And I mean no particular form of mysterious or emotional or supernatural experience, but just the quiet inner certainty which comes from the laying hold by one's whole being—mind, heart, and will—of an undeniable objective reality, that certainty which religious men have always had. Our second question, then, is, "Can I *know* God in anything like the same sense in which I know my mother or my closest friend? Is there anything real and permanent, anything real for me, in what men call religious experience?" To this question we can reply with the same confident "Yes"; for it is precisely this experience of God—an experience of friendship with a Father—which real religion gives.

It is when our lives are at their truest and finest that this desire for the assured companionship of God comes most strongly upon us. You hear it said frequently that men never turn to religion until trouble comes and then it is that they fall back on religion as a refuge and a comfort. When you hear such statements made, give them an emphatic denial. That is a cheap use of religion and a cheap brand of religion which is sought—refuge and comfort alone. If there are people who feel the desire for companionship with God only at such times, it means that at those times only do they live deeply and fully enough to come into touch with reality. As we pointed out in Chapter One, most people turn to religion, unthinkingly, unexpectedly, whenever "life is most real." And the times of reality are occasions of exaltation—coming of age, marriage, parenthood—as well as occasions of perplexity and loneliness and sorrow.

III

But let us suppose all this talk about fellowship with God is a blank page to you. God as one whom you can know in experience means nothing. How can that which

now seems desperately unreal, possibly pure nonsense, become real to you?

1. First of all, *by understanding what religious experience is*—that it is no strange, mysterious, supernatural ecstasy, absolutely different from everything else we know in life. There are those to whom God comes most frequently that way—mystics and saints and prophets. However, we are not talking of them, but of ordinary garden variety of folk like ourselves. People sometimes complain that they do not *feel* God working in them. Certainly not. Why should they? Much the same principles apply in the spiritual as in the physical realm. We do not *feel* food being changed into blood and bone and brain. We do not *feel* a wound or bruise healing as Nature does her unobtrusive yet unceasing work. So, too, is it in the first instance with the operation of God in our lives. We must expect to find him working in the same quiet way as Nature works. That is the first point to realize. And the second leads directly from it.

2. *We do not recognize God, because our eyes are blind to the evidences of him on every hand.* Religious experience is not so much the discovery of new facts about God; it is a new understanding of facts well known and long familiar. It is not a matter of proof but of insight; not a matter of argumentation but appreciation. This is a fundamental fact that runs through all of life.

It is true of our appreciation of beauty. A party of Americans were touring Europe one summer on one of the inexpensive trips which make it possible to see "all of Europe" for five or six hundred dollars. They were in Switzerland and had come to Interlaken. Interlaken, you will recall, is the village from which one gets his first view of the Jungfrau. As you stand behind the long line of hotels which flank the village street and look up the valley, the peak of the mountain, completely capped with snow,

stands out against the sky, framed in a V-shaped gap in the green hillsides. It is one of the most magnificent sights in all the world. This party reached Interlaken in the late evening, too late to see the view. The following morning after breakfast they came out from their hotel and stood gazing up the valley. It was a matchless summer day. Not a cloud dulled the sky. The Jungfrau, glistening in pure white, was framed by the bright green hills against the clear blue of the heavens. As they stood there, one of the party, a school teacher from Pottsville, Pennsylvania, turned to her companion and said, "So this is Switzerland! Well, I don't see why they bring us to Switzerland. Why, there's nothing to see in Switzerland but scenery; and we have scenery in Pottsville, Pennsylvania." Do you see that the difference between that woman and her neighbor, who stood silent before the sheer grandeur of the Alpine scene, was not a difference in the scenery on which they looked? The same view raised itself before them both. And it was not a difference in their optical powers; for all we know, she may have had a very much better pair of eyes than he. The difference lay in the eyes of their imaginations, in the eyes of vision with which they looked. He saw one of Nature's grandest panoramas; she saw her own coal fields.

It is true of our appreciation of human personality. The story is told of two young doctors who were traveling together in China. They had been classmates in medical school. One was on a trip around the world, preparatory to setting up a lucrative practice in New York City. The other was on his way into the interior of China as a medical missionary. They were sailing up the Yangtze on a river boat and were approaching one of the small villages which line its banks. The end of the landing stage was black with Chinese coolies, gesticulating, jabbering, elbowing each other, pushing to catch coins thrown from the deck by the passengers, straining to be the first to carry the baggage ashore. As the two men stood by the ship's

rail and looked down on the confused crowd, the doctor who was on his way around the world turned to his companion and said, "Damned dirty Chinks!" And the other, on his way to medical service in the heart of China, said, without a trace of sentimentality in his voice, "Brothers and sisters of yours, children for whom Christ died." Do you see that the difference between those two men was not a difference in the people they were evaluating? They were looking at identically the same coolies. And it was not a difference in their eyesight. It was a difference in the eyes of their imaginations, their eyes of vision. One saw "damned dirty Chinks." The other saw children of God, brothers and sisters of his.

It is true of our appreciation of God. It has been the experience of religious men and women down through the centuries to search for God clear round the world—through intellectual inquiry, through mystic and psychic and ritualistic experiences, through self-abasement and self-discipline—and then to find him right beneath their feet, at their very finger tips, through a new appreciation of age-old facts and experiences.

> I said, "I will find God," and forth I went
> To seek him in the clearness of the sky,
> But over me stood unendurably
> Only a pitiless sapphire firmament
> Ringing the world—blank splendor; yet intent
> Still to find God, "I will go seek," said I,
> "His way upon the waters," and drew nigh
> An ocean marge weed-strewn and foam-besprent;
> And the waves dashed on idle sand and stone,
> And very vacant was the long, blue sea;
> But in the evening as I sat alone,
> My window open to the vanishing day,
> Dear God! I could not choose but kneel and pray,
> And it sufficed that I was found of Thee.[1]

[1] Edward Dowden, "Seeking God."

It was just this which Jesus was continually doing for people—opening their eyes to hitherto unsuspected values and beauties and truths. Jesus saw nothing different, nothing not seen by all his contemporaries, by you and me. The lilies of the field and the birds of the air—they were the same lilies his companions brushed rudely aside with their heels, the same birds they unthinkingly threw stones at. Zaccheus, Mary Magdalene, the Woman at the Well—they were precisely the same people others saw as an unprincipled tax exactor, a common prostitute, a degenerate drudge. He saw the same things and people; he simply saw them more deeply, more truly.

Life does not differ primarily in the facts it presents to us, but in the meaning we see in those facts; not in the experiences it holds for us, but in what we do with those experiences. There is much truth in the New Testament figure: God does stand at the door of every heart and knock. But this is a fact we discover in retrospect, not in prospect. It is seen as we look back over the course of our religious experience, not from its beginning. God forces himself, his will, his love on no one. If you choose, you may stuff your ears and be deaf to that knock, or you may raise such a clatter within that the knock is never heard. To those who will see him, God reveals himself in everything about them, in all the experiences which life brings to them. Whether you will see the spiritual meaning and the spiritual foundation behind and through and at the base of all those experiences will depend upon the eyes of vision with which you look.

If you can go out upon a clear night and gaze up at the vast starry fabric above and, stretching your imagination until it fairly aches with the stretching of it, realize that even then it fails to make a beginning at grasping what you see there, and still see nothing behind it all—no mind, no purpose, no meaning; if you can take the simplest flower and let your mind play on the beauty you see there,

the simplicity and yet the incredible complexity, the intricate age-long developing process which has gone into the making of that flower, and see in that process nothing—no meaning, no significance [2]; if you can stand before any human being and understand the marvel and the mystery which have gone into the growth of a single cell in that life, and sense nothing behind and in it all; above all, if you can gaze into the face and through to the soul of anyone (I care not who it is, how unattractive, how unprivileged, whether it be your closest friend or the dirtiest ragamuffin on the street), and fail to discover there that bit of pure gold, that spark of God himself which lies at the core of every one of us if we will but search and find it—then all I can say is, "God pity you! What you need is not fresh evidence of the nearness of God to you. What you need is to see aright the evidence already before you."

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
  And our benumbed conceiving soars!
The drift of pinions, would we harken,
  Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;
  Turn but a stone and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estranged faces,
  That miss the many-splendored thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
  Cry; and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
  Pitched between Heaven and Charing Cross

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[2] Cf. Tennyson's familiar lines:

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry, clinging heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water,
Not of Gennesaret, but Thames! [3]

3. But, if your life is throbbing with virile manhood or womanhood, it seeks some more certain, more substantial, more personal experience of God than has thus far been suggested—than the sense of God in beauty; or the awe of the Divine in the majesty of the universe; or communion with God through meditation and study and prayer; or even the vision of God in human life at its best. I am convinced that in the vigor and practicalness and urgency of our youth we shall most surely find God in quite another way—*at the heart of the world's work.*

For whatever else he may be, God is supremely a working God; that is what is meant by a living God. He is desperately in earnest about life and about the transformation of our world. Where shall we find him save in his workshop, in the struggle of making this world into the image of his kingdom? There is something of this suggestion in Studdert-Kennedy's lines:

Then will He come—with meekness for his glory,
God in a workman's jacket as before,
Living again the eternal gospel story,
Sweeping the shavings from his workshop floor.

So many and many a modern man and woman have found him. To some the experience has come as a gradual realization as they have thrown themselves into the effort to relieve human need in the throbbing centers of humanity where we might suppose the vision of God would be dimmest—the city slums. This thought has been expressed in a well-known hymn:

[3] Francis Thompson, "The Kingdom of God."

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
  Where sound the cries of race and clan
Above the noise of selfish strife,
  We hear thy voice, O Son of Man.

In haunts of wretchedness and need,
  On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
From paths where hide the lures of greed,
  We catch the vision of thy tears.[4]

Others have found him abroad, as they sought to carry what light had been given them to those who lacked their privileges and opportunities. To others God has become real in the leadership of the great moral causes of our day—the crusades against war and liquor and vice and crime, the crusade for a united world. Still others have found him through some humbler task—the care of illness or the nurture of little tots or the creation of a Christ-possessed home—wherever one can be sure the concern of God is enlisted, and feel the press of the hand of God with his own, the mingling of the tears of God in his sympathy, the joining of the exultation of God to his victory.

Fellowship with God, then, is not primarily a fraternal relationship to be enjoyed mutually, but a great task to be undertaken unitedly. It is an experience of partnership. I suspect that is what Jesus meant when he said, "Take my yoke upon you" (Matthew 11:29). Take upon your shoulder some part of the burden under the other half of which his shoulder ceaselessly toils and you will find him as the Great Companion of life.

It is a glorious conception this, a conception for youth, that God is actually seeking and urging us to join with him in the enterprise of making a new world; that the destiny of human life is not the living of a certain kind of life or the achieving of a certain kind of character or the attaining of some future celestial state, but the entering

[4] Frank Mason North, "The City."

now, today, into a vital working partnership with the Author of Life himself in the making of heaven on earth; that in some degree God cannot get his work done without us.

You recall the lines George Eliot put in the mouth of the great violin maker, Stradivari:

> When any master holds
> Twixt chin and hand a violin of mine,
> He will be glad that Stradivari lived,
> Made violins and made them of the best.
> . . . For while God gives them skill
> I give them instruments to play upon,
> God choosing me to help him.
> . . . If my hand slacked
> I should rob God since he is fullest good—
> Leaving a blank instead of violins.
> . . . He could not make
> Antonio Stradivari's violins
> Without Antonio.

Look at the world as God looks at the world, and you must find him in it. Look at men and women as he does—the poor and the prodigal, the ignorant and the haughty, your roommate and the foreigner—all of them as brothers of each other and brothers of yours, and you will find the Father of whom they are all children. Look at the world as he does, not as an arena for self-expression and self-realization, not as a field on which you can hew out a business or intellectual or political or artistic career, but as humanity to be served and redeemed; enlist your life, all of it for all time, in that great and eternal task in which his infinite love ceaselessly pours out its all; place love in the center of your spirit and sacrifice at the heart of your career, and you will find abiding fellowship with him who is Sacrificial Love.

IV

4. There is still another way in which God becomes real in the life of many a man and woman. I hesitate to mention it only because I suspect it is an unknown land to most of you. But if you will remember that this experience of God must come unsought and that it may come early or late in life, or not at all, and if you will seek to find God for yourself where I have already suggested—in the throbbing heart of the world's life—I shall refer to it briefly. It is the experience of *being found by God.* A hint or two of it has occurred above. It is our recognition that God *does* stand at the door and knock. In our eager longing for fellowship with God, we forget that more eager and steadfast is his yearning for our companionship. In our hot pursuit of him, we forget that he is tirelessly seeking us. But, sometimes, to some men the realization of this truth comes; there steals over their lives a warmth of the Divine Presence which cannot be resisted and they are "found of God." It is the experience to which Francis Thompson has given most familiar expression:

I fled him down the nights and down the days;
I fled him down the arches of the years;
I fled him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from him, and under running laughter.

. . . . . .

(God speaks)
"Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save me, save only me?
All which I took from thee, I did but take
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou mightst seek it in my arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp my hand and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of his hand, outstretched caressingly? [5]

Human experience is forever crying out with Job, "O, that I knew where I might find him. I go forward but he is not there, backward but I cannot perceive him." The experience of religion is forever replying with the psalmist, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there." We do not discover God; we learn to trust and are discovered by God. That may be the way the power we seek for life will come. It is a gift to those who trust.

The way of trust is difficult to define. It is even more difficult to direct another along it. It may become real suddenly, it may be a very gradual realization. It comes as our lives somehow are enabled to thrust themselves forth in a temper of confidence which they have never been able to manage before. It is the achievement of something all along dimly felt as possible, but never before experienced. This is religious faith. Increment of power may wait on increment of faith—clearer vision of life's hidden realities, steadier courage to launch forth toward goals never fully achieved, and a great trust which eludes definition just because it is the ultimate destiny of life.

There are two ways in which one may learn to swim. One is the method of instruction. In that method, the learner is guided through a long series of exercises. Then after a time, a life belt is put around his body and he is led into the water that he may test the movements learned on land. Finally, he is allowed to try it without a life belt. And so the novice stands in deep water and cautiously raises first one foot and then the other, mustering courage to thrust himself out upon the surface, daring one or two

[5] Francis Thompson, "The Hound of Heaven."

strokes and then reaching quickly for solid earth. Ultimately, after many false starts and some anguish, he trusts himself to the water—and swims. Something like that is the way most of us go through life—tentative, hesitant, apprehensive, unhappy.

But there is another way to learn to swim. I understand it is the child's most natural way. It is to go down to the water's edge and jump in, trusting to the buoyancy of the water to bear one up. The water does not fail the child. No more does the goodness of God fail those who trust.

V

Dean Sperry likens our relationship with God to the throwing of a bridge across a stream from one bank to the other, from the shore of our humanity to the shore of the Divine. And he reminds us that there are three ways in which the bridge may be constructed. We may begin on the hither bank and push out bit by bit into the stream, putting down piers into the bed of the river as we go; our structure will be an old-fashioned bridge. Thus many men try to form their relationship with God, building out tentatively from their human experience toward an immobile and indifferent opposite shore. But the bed of the stream is shifting, and this is a precarious and uncertain method.

Or we may conceive of our structure as a suspension bridge in which the cables are thrown across to us from the opposite bank, and our part is merely to receive them and make them fast. Thus many men conceive of religion as entirely an affair of God's initiation and our receptivity, and that view is very vocal in much contemporary Christian interpretation.

But there is a third type of bridge. It is the cantilever. Construction is begun simultaneously from either end and the girders are pushed forth with equal zeal and speed

from either side, until finally, directly over the center of the stream, a workman on each side reaches out, hands are joined, and the bridge is completed.

So we are to think of our experience with God—as the building of a cantilever bridge. And, as in the metaphor, the hands which join are the hands of workmen, fellow workmen in a common task; but the worker from one bank bears no equipment to commend him other than the sincerity of his own effort, while the Worker from the far shore carries the unlimited resources of eternal love; and their common enterprise is the building of a kingdom of friendly men.

CHAPTER NINE

Power for Life—Worship

OF ALL THE DILEMMAS with which life confronts us, none is more puzzling than that between preoccupation and detachment. There is that in life which is forever urging us to throw ourselves completely into the immediate situation. The attractive fellowship of friends, our gregarious impulses, fear of inner loneliness which increases as life advances, the concrete challenge of immediate tasks—all these call life to an intense and useful preoccupation. But there is that in life also, something very deep which seems to flow from the funded experience of the past, which forever warns against a too complete involvement and counsels detachment. Preoccupation saps life's energies and drains it of the power we are seeking. Its more serious disservice is that, by busying hand and brain with the project of the moment, it obscures other and more important things. It warps perspective, foreshortens vision, befuddles thinking and dulls insight which should be one of religion's best gifts. Worship is the guardian against these dangers of the too active life; it is the highest use of the detachment demanded by life.

The mature religious life is increasingly individual in its sources, increasingly inclusive in its expression. The great values of fellowship with its rich gifts are never lost,

but less and less does it look to others for guidance. More and more are its insights and its resources drawn from solitude. Increasingly the light for its life's path is found in the inner spiritual experience, in personal meditation and prayer. There are grave dangers in this fact; they are only too apparent. But it is the law of the developing spiritual life. And the other side of the matter is that, from solitude, the mature religious spirit emerges with an ever clearer vision for the life of the world. Problems are seen which were overlooked before. All of society is viewed in wider perspective. The sense of social responsibility grows. Every aspect of life is seen standing in need of religion's standards and religion's power. People's true motivations, both worthy and unworthy, are recognized for what they are. Personal purpose is purified, and life is prepared to cast itself beyond any dictate of caution or self-interest in the remaking of society's life. Mature religion is increasingly personal in its roots and increasingly social in its fruits.

II

If it be true that we are unsure today what we are to think about Christ, there is one other subject on which we find ourselves more uncertain—what we are to believe about prayer. This is far the more serious. Our difficulties in our thought of Christ ought not seriously to affect our practical relation to him. He remains the Guide of our thinking, the Companion of our striving, and, by the testimony of our experience, the Master of our life. But with prayer it is different. It is the practice of prayer, not merely our ideas about it, which is affected by our uncertainty.

In passing, let us remind ourselves once more that we fail to pray, not primarily because we don't know what we believe or are troubled how to pray, but because we are not sufficiently in earnest about life. Physical weariness,

sheer laziness, the fear of what roommate or friends might think are more effective inhibitions to a true life of prayer than all the intellectual difficulties concocted by the skeptics of the ages. As always, our intellectual difficulties prove, on examination, to be majorly practical moral difficulties. But, when sincerity and a desire to develop our comradeship with God have been achieved, there still remain obstacles which seriously block us in the attainment of a deep and steady reality in prayer. These obstacles are three.

1. *We have come to know altogether too much about the way prayer works.* That is what modern psychology has done for us. It has laid bare the machinery of the spiritual life. It has introduced us to new conceptions—S-R bonds, autosuggestion, and others—conceptions which have stripped prayer of anything other than subjective usefulness and have taken from it the beauty and power as well as the mystery it once possessed, leaving it a stark and lifeless skeleton. We must not minimize these difficulties. When one goes for the first time behind the scenes of a theater and sees the mechanics of the play—the flimsy scenery, the crude lighting devices, the cheap stage expedients, the daubed paint, the cursing stage-hands—it is a disillusioning experience. As a matter of fact, the truth or falsity of the drama thus portrayed has not changed one iota, but it seems to have lost its beauty and its meaning for us. When one first studies anatomy and sees the details of the human frame revealed in all their coarseness and ugliness, it is a disillusioning experience. As a matter of fact, the mystery and grandeur and miracle of that indefinable which we call "life" are not diminished by one iota, rather greatly increased. But it seems to us that much of the meaning has gone from life, for we now know how it works. Some such experience of disillusionment many have felt with regard to prayer.

Let us be clear on what psychology has done to prayer. It has described its operation; it has not explained the ultimate source of its power. To borrow the figure of another, the electric light comes along a wire and is manifested through a bulb. But that does not explain the light. Its ultimate source is a powerhouse. Disconnect the powerhouse, and the wire and the bulb have no meaning and no use. Moreover, when we have traced the current from the bulb along the wire to the powerhouse, there is still unexplained the one really important thing, that which makes the light—the nature of electricity itself. So it is with prayer. It must be judged not by the apparent source of its power nor by the mechanism through which power comes, but by the effects which it produces—its light in human life. *We have not "explained" away prayer until we have produced without it the fruits of prayer in human life.*

2. There is a second and a more real difficulty—*we live in a world which does not pray.* The influence of this fact upon our lives cannot be exaggerated; far more than we care to admit, we take the temper of our spiritual lives from the dominant religious life about us and he is indeed a powerful personality who keeps his own prayer strong and real in the midst of a society which does not pray. Surely the fact itself requires no proof. Our modern world may believe in prayer, but it does not pray. It may find prayer rational (I believe its best thinking does), but it does not find prayer real. Many people may say prayers, but few really pray. It is no easy task to live in an atmosphere where prayer is theoretically affirmed but practically denied. The natural and full development of our comradeship with God is unconsciously estopped by the pressure of the conventional.

3. Finally, we do not pray because *we do not know precisely what to expect of prayer.* Once more we confront

the result of "modern thought," which has given so much to our conception of religion but which, with all its contributions, has taken from us certain values indispensable for religion's health. Modern thought has not taken God away from us, a God who is personal and living. But it has brought God down from some far-distant heaven and placed him at the active center of human life. We now see his presence everywhere, in beauty, in natural law, in spiritual law, in high moral idealism, in every noble act of our fellows. There is great gain in that. God ceases to be a gigantic Potentate on a majestic eminence. He becomes a Living Spirit actively at work through all his world. There is great gain; but there is some loss, too. God, being everywhere in general, is nowhere in particular. Men used to point to definite acts of God. They would say, "God directed me to do so and so." "This is God's act; that is man's." The demarcation between the divine and the human was clear. Now that line has disappeared. We no longer say, "God did this, or that. God directed me to do so and so." We no longer feel the direct imprint of God's power and love and guidance on our lives. We believe in a God who acts, but we do not know specifically where he acts. And, not knowing definitely where he acts, we might almost as well disbelieve in his activity altogether. A machine which is built to run but remains always idle soon becomes unfit to run. A God who is believed to exercise personal activity but is never known definitely to do so soon ceases to be a living force in his world.

At no point is this weakness in current conceptions of God so evident and so serious as in our belief in prayer. We still believe it is a good thing to pray. It puts us into communion with the great "spiritual forces" of the universe. It quiets and steadies and empowers our spirits. It opens our lives to the direction of God's Spirit which is making itself felt through his purpose in history, through

our own consciences, through the accumulated spiritual heritage of the race. But when we are asked what prayer accomplishes apart from self-suggestion or in what living sense God speaks to us through prayer, we do not know. We do believe that prayer accomplishes more than the subjective inspiration of him who prays. But what? How? We are not sure. The plain truth is that we seem less sure of God than of our nearest neighbor. And so prayer tends to be no longer the intimate fellowship of two friendly spirits, the fellowship through which the world's most potent work is done.

If you will analyze your own thinking, you will discover a large part of your genuine difficulties concerning prayer rooted here. It is essentially a problem in our conception of God. I believe it to be—this question of the activity of God—the most fundamental and vital problem in the whole range of contemporary religious thinking. The solution will in no sense affect the fundamental validity of prayer as a living experience and a living power. For the Living God whom we have pictured is One with whom we may know the intimate comradeship which is prayer. Until our thinking is more adequately clarified, our course is to place even stronger reliance on the authority we so reluctantly trust, the validity of prayer's meaning in experience. This difficulty is part of the challenge of the present religious situation, that through adventuring in the experience of prayer we may hew out an answer to the problem.

III

How, then, can one make more real in his own life the experience of the comradeship of God?

First of all, by broadening and deepening his conception of what prayer is. In spite of the increasing emphasis on worship in recent years, to too many of us prayer is

still merely asking things from God—a monologue of pleading, more like the child's note to Santa Claus at Christmas than the great and deep communion of two free and loving spirits. The prayer which asks is only one aspect of the experience of comradeship, though an important aspect. And it is an aspect which should come late in the prayer experience, following the simpler and more elementary forms of prayer.

For prayer, in the first instance, is *elevation*. It is the lifting up of the whole life to a higher level, a level where the spirit is refreshed, the personality unified, and the horizons of spiritual vision cleared. That is always the first thing prayer does for us. And it is the first thing our lives need.

Second, prayer is *illumination*. It is the atmosphere in which and the means by which the will of God for us becomes clear. We should understand that our praying cannot change God's purpose; but it can reveal it to us. It makes no particular difference how this experience of illumination is explained. This is one of the points where it is futile as well as impossible to seek to mark off the action of God from the suggestion of our own minds. We shall never know the freedom which true prayer requires until we cease wondering where God's part ends and our own part begins, until we see in the whole experience an interweaving of threads human and divine so intricate as to defy analysis. It is the fact of our experience which is important. And our experience is that our minds are befuddled; we cannot see clearly the decision which must be made or the course we must pursue; we lift our problem into the spirit of purified and earnest prayer; we rise from prayer to find our minds quieted and the things to do shown clearly before us.

Third, prayer is *energization*. It is the source of new strength for ourselves. To many this is the heart of the prayer experience. Here again explanation is of minor

importance. We know that through prayer we are able for things otherwise impossible. And we know that this fact of our experience alone would fully justify the centrality of prayer in our philosophy. "Who rises from his knees a better man, his prayer is answered."

There follows immediately still another meaning—prayer as *intercession,* the source of strength for others. It is here that most of our intellectual difficulties focus. Down through the centuries, the firm belief of religion has been that through our prayers there might be made available in another life comfort and power and love which otherwise it would not have known. But in this new world of scientific law, psychological as well as physical, how can we longer believe in the efficacy of intercessory prayer? To this question we have no simple and sure answer. Recent scientific investigations especially with their emphasis on the credibility of thought-transference have tended to help rather than baffle us in our problem. Increasingly science is pointing us to a universe vibrant with mental and spiritual currents, a universe in which the impact of personality upon personality seems less and less the slave of time and space. Possibly it is most helpful to conceive that we live in a spiritual economy in which, just as in the physical world, no energy is ever lost, no cause is without its effect, no current of influence is ever started which does not reach its mark. One imagines a law of the conservation of spiritual energy. One conceives prayer to be the supreme energy of that spiritual economy. And because it is an economy (an ordered system governed by dependable law), prayer must fall within the laws of the economy. Such a view of prayer rules out at once all those extravagances which have made intercessory prayer a travesty and have shattered men's confidence in the reasonableness of one of the noblest impulses of the human spirit—the desire to pray for the welfare of someone else in the surety that prayer matters. No prayer, however well-meaning,

which runs counter to God's purpose can effect its end, for it violates the fundamental law of the spiritual universe. But it is altogether reasonable to suppose that it is written into the very structure of the spiritual economy in which we live that prayer should be its supreme energizing force. When an honest and consecrated spirit throws the full power of its aspiration and desire in behalf of the best interest of another life and in the direction of God's high hope for that life, something is accomplished which can be accomplished in no other way. The well-nigh universal testimony of those who have understood the mysterious depths of the spiritual life most fully would confirm this view to which scientific thinking is pointing us. Here is the statement of one who is universally revered as among the noblest of modern saints:

> The privilege of prayer to me is one of the most cherished possessions, because faith and experience alike convince me that God himself sees and answers, and his answers I never venture to criticize. It is only my part to ask. It is entirely his to give or withhold, as he knows is best. If it were otherwise, I would not dare to pray at all. In the quiet of the home, in the heat of life and strife, in the face of death, the privilege of speech with God is inestimable. I value it more because it calls for nothing that the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot give—that is, the simplest expression of his simplest desire. When I can neither see, nor hear, nor speak, still I can pray so that God can hear. When I finally pass through the valley of the shadow of death, I expect to pass through it in conversation with him.[1]

Finally, we must think of prayer as *co-operation*. Together with thinking and working, it is a method of our co-operation with God, possibly the highest method of the three. This is implicit in our belief in a moral universe in which God is purposing good and we, by laying the dedi-

[1] Wilfred T. Grenfell in *What Christ Means to Me* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1927).

cation and energies of our lives alongside his, may actually co-operate with him in the achievement of his purposes.

As we consider prayer at the level at which it becomes a channel of creative power, most of the difficulties which surround its more elementary aspects will be resolved. . . . We see that prayer, far from being a tiresomely reiterated asking, based upon a conception of God that belongs to the childhood of the race, is the highest and most dynamic form of interaction between the human and the divine. It is the whole personality—intellect as well as emotion and will—energizing in fellowship with the Lord of all life.[2]

IV

A first hint in the making of prayer more real is the broadening and deepening of one's practice of prayer. "How shall I pray?" one is often asked. "In two ways," I would reply. First of all, prayer should be natural, spontaneous, occasional. Pray when you feel like it, where you feel like it, and as you feel like it. There is no aspect of the spiritual life where one may so safely follow his intuition as here. Remember that prayer, in its simplest form, is just the natural bubbling over of the free spirit—in gratitude, in penitence, in concern, in desire, in adoration. Henry Ward Beecher is quoted as saying, "I pray on the principle that the wine knocks the cork out of the bottle. There is an inward fermentation, and there must be a vent." This is the raw material of the higher forms of comradeship. A friend of mine says that he finds himself doing much of his praying as he travels back and forth in the New York subways. Possibly it is because he has no other way to occupy his time; possibly, also, because the rush and crush and din of this symbol of modern civilization drive him to seek refuge from the paganism it

[2] E. Herman, *Creative Prayer* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1921), p. 34.

represents. We must recover for the health of our spirits this spontaneous, unordered expression of their life.

But that is only half of the practice of prayer. In the second place, prayer should be ordered, disciplined, regular. This is absolutely necessary. Like any other steady, useful habit of life, prayer requires a definite time each day set apart and faithfully guarded. Our naïveté in this matter is really astounding. We expect the principles which we recognize and faithfully obey in every other region of life to be inoperative here, in life's most delicate and difficult experience. If we gave as little attention to the care of our bodies as we give to the care of our spirits, we should find ourselves in a hospital within a month.

The best method for the practice of prayer must be largely a matter of personal discovery. One suggestion may be offered—the generous use of experiment. Those to whom prayer is hardly more than a word-saying procedure may find it helpful to set apart some spot which may be kept fairly free from other uses for a few minutes of private worship each day. It may be of use to hang there a portrait of Christ or a simple wooden cross or a picture with special meaning. Near by may be set a table with candles or flowers or favorite books of devotion. At least once each day, sit or kneel at that place and, using the cross or picture as an aid to the imagination, spend a few moments in reading, meditation, and prayer. Let that spot be to you a miniature sanctuary.

In a world whose interests are so largely pagan and whose atmosphere is so largely secular, men need the aid of a place where they can unfailingly create spiritual associations. Those who so establish for themselves a center for personal worship will find that there is gradually building within their lives an inner sanctuary of the imagination which requires no external symbols. They will find it possible to make of any spot, however unfavorable, a place of genuine worship.

The achievement of a satisfying and steady inner experience requires cultivation at once conscientious and thoughtful. We shall have to feel our own way. We shall have to discover what time of day best meets our need. We shall have to discover what method is most natural for us. We shall want to experiment in the use of the prayers of others. But, finally, through the processes of experimentation we must come to the experience where prayer is woven into the fabric of our habits, an unconscious part of the fullness of life.

Still another hint is the suggestion that each one of us must discover his own pathway into the presence of God. We should make use, to the full limit of our ability, of the experience of others, through books of prayers, through personal advice and through corporate worship. But, when all possible help has been derived thus, each individual soul must find his way to God by himself. One wishes that we could help young people and many, many others to see and believe that fact. The progress of the life of our spirits is much like that of our passage from youth to maturity. We begin in a relationship of dependence. We draw our ideas from others, we lean upon others for support, we cannot "go up into the presence of the Lord" except as others lead us by the hand. But there comes the day in every man's religious growth when that must stop. Gathering all he can of helpfulness from friends into his own experience, he must set out on the seeking of his own pathway; and he must set out *alone*. On that day his religious experience really begins. For on that day for the first time, God as the intimate and private Acquaintance of his own life becomes his personal possession. Better to have advanced a dozen steps on the pathway of one's own religious experience than a hundred miles down the pathway of another. From that time forth, there is a sense in which he treads a solitary way. He shares some experiences with others. All his own experiences he seeks to make clear

to them. But there is about them a quality which cannot be shared. In a peculiar way they are his personal possession which no one else can wholly comprehend. He now begins to know God as the peculiar Friend of his own life. His experience is somewhat like that of a woodsman breaking a new trail through dense forests. To the right and left of him he hears the sound of his companions' axes. He knows they are going over much the same course he is—through the same underbrush, into the same ravines, up the same sharp ascents. They are headed toward the same goal. Occasionally he catches a glimpse of one or another through the woods. He calls to them and receives an answering call in reply. But he never clearly sees them and they never join him on his trail. Although they pursue closely parallel courses to the same destination, each woodsman hews out his own path.

V

Finally, if we would find the resources we seek in prayer, one further condition is to be met. The life of prayer must be organic to life as a whole. We must not think of prayer as a special exercise set apart for a special time and circumstance, a peculiar experience existing by itself and only distantly related to the humdrum of our ordinary living. We shall need to remind ourselves constantly that it is our *life* which is our real prayer and that those phases of living to which we have given the distinctive name of prayer have value for us and recognition before the face of God just to the extent that they are of the same cloth as the life from which they spring. Their test must be in the results they show in the press of life.

The one important question is whether the meditation will stand the wear and tear of common life. If it appears fanciful and visionary, once we have reached the office and plunged into the day's business, it was a failure, no matter

how it made our hearts to glow at the time. No meditation is really valid unless it leaves us with something to which we can return during the day's business and find it helpful there.[3]

With the fellowship of comradeship must go the fellowship of common effort.

And it is the worth of our common living which, in the last analysis, will determine how far down that solitary pathway of spiritual exploration we shall go; or, to change the figure, how steady and how permanent shall be our enjoyment of the Divine Comradeship. A writer who has achieved much in understanding the deeper secrets of the religious life has put it thus:

> Prayer is, in the last resort, worth exactly as much—or as little—as the man behind it. . . . For prayer is the expression of a life. It rises out of a hinterland which determines its quality. From beginning to end, it is the presuppositions behind prayer that we need to be chiefly concerned about. Let the *law* of prayer be observed, and its *method* can take care of itself. "The mark of a saint," Bishop Westcott reminds us, "is not perfection but consecration. A saint is not a man without faults, but a man who has given himself without reserve to God." And, rightly understood, one act of self-surrender can make a saint. Here is our only true wisdom in prayer, and here the only method that is of universal application.[4]

VI

The most helpful technique for worship each must discover for himself. But the results which should be expected from worship, the norms by which it may be tested, can be suggested:

Worship should bring *wisdom*. What a searching test to

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[3] E. Herman, *Creative Prayer* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1921), p. 80.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 130.

put to it! No mere emotionalism, however inspiring or pleasurable, which slows mental processes and dulls insight; no meaningless and archaic rote which beclouds rather than clarifies integrity of mind; no escape from the true and deep facts of life—hard facts, they often are—through mystical elevation. True worship may be an aid to clearer thinking, and in two ways. First, by preparing the mind to think quietly, honestly, and the spirit to face truth eagerly, courageously; second, by presenting to the mind, through the content of worship itself, unrecognized truth about ourselves, our families, our work, our neighbors, our church, our world, and presenting it with suggestion and clarity peculiarly fitted to gain acceptance.

Worship should communicate *vision*—the lifting of sight above preoccupation with the petty things of life, the portrayal of broader perspectives and deeper meanings, the stimulus to imagination which makes religion's unique insight possible.

Worship should minister to *self-understanding*—through stimulating honesty of mind, sensitivity of spirit, fearless passion for full truth, faith in oneself.

Worship should effect *purification*—so presenting the mirror to life that failure can be faced, wrong repented or forgiven; bringing life into the cleansing power of a Presence which is at once immovable truth and immeasurable love so that it emerges purged and whole.

Worship should nurture *faith*—such confidence in oneself, in comrades, in the possibility of progress, in the unchanging God, as makes life wholly different—faith which breeds courage and, through courage, accomplishment.

Worship should impel *resolution*—the daring and full gift of self which translates the visions and high desires of the spirit into the stuff of the world's life.

Worship should furnish *power*—receiving those spiritually ill from disappointment, perplexity, loneliness, defeat, failure, and sending them forth with each peculiar

need met by its own peculiar healing. This is the final test of worship, both of its genuineness and of its value.

> Some superabundance there is in the vision of God which sends the seer back not to the old but to the new; not with a release from old grievances, but with something like a hunger for pain and difficulty. The edge of the tool of the will is restored and it is eager for world making. The man is able to fight, to oppose, to suffer; he is endowed with grit, with faith. This is the moral result of true worship.[5]

Worship is able to do all this because what worship should give, that worship at its best *is*. It should be in itself the realization of a man's true self, the realization of the life with God which is the fullness of life. If it is the objective of worship to create that life, it is part of worship's method to create by making that life actually come to pass momentarily within its own experience. Worship at its highest is not merely the vision of the ideal; it is the experience of the ideal. Not merely the understanding of one's true self but the living of one's true self. The experience of worship is the life we seek; it is the knowledge, for a moment or longer, of our destiny. It is not a reservoir to be tapped and drained to supply the needs of ordinary life. It is a tuning fork to strike the note to which all of life is to be keyed. We should go out from it not to revel in its memory but to recreate its substance. All the rest of life is the slow and tedious realization of that which in worship is already completely real.

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[5] W. E. Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), p. 440.

CHAPTER TEN

Power for Life—Service

WE HAVE SAID that when a man comes face to face with Christ and with a vision of the life Christ believes it possible for him to lead, three things inevitably follow: the experience enormously purifies and elevates his own ideal for himself, it greatly intensifies his realization of how far short he is now falling of a decent approach to what he might be, it creates in him a great passion to bridge that gap—a passion that the man he is should become that man he has seen so clearly in vision.

That is the first thing which contact with Christ is likely to do for a man. But that is not the whole story. To come really face to face with him also brings home upon us a similar realization regarding the world. First, a new vision of what this corporate human life of ours might be if men would live as God intended they should and as they are perfectly capable of living, as brothers and sisters, the relationships of life dominated by co-operation, trust, and mutual regard. Second, an awakening to the hopelessly cheap imitation the life of our world today is, with its materialism, its jealousy, its pettiness, its strife, its selfishness, its sin. Third, a great surging desire to enlist in the job of making over the life of society into the brotherhood of men it might and should be. The vision of this world

as it might be—that is part of what we mean by the kingdom of God. The facing of the world as it is—that is precisely what we mean by "conviction of sin," corporate and personal. The enlistment of life in the task of transformation—that is precisely what we mean by Christian consecration. That is the source of the challenge to service.

On one point we want to be very clear—that the impelling, inescapable challenge to us to throw ourselves wholly into the turmoil of the world's life in service does not rest necessarily on our religious belief or our religious experience. This thing which contact with Christ does for us is to bring before our consciousness with a fresh vividness a challenge which was already there. That absolute compulsion to the dedication of life arises from two sources—the sheer facts of human need in the world and the instinct within us to respond to that need. If you walk down the street and see a child stumble and fall into the gutter, without a moment's thought something within you pushes you forward to lift that child. If you hear that an atrocious violence has been done to a fine, young woman, something within you rises up to protect her, to punish the violator. If you see a friend, especially someone of whom you are very fond, throwing away his possibilities in drunkenness or foolish dissipation or utter frivolity, something within you moves not only to prevent his foolishness, but to use every possible means to bring to the surface and to dominance in his life the possibilities now being wasted there.

That is the compulsion to service, as natural and intuitive and inevitable as one of the instincts of our make-up. But, it may be asked, what has all this to do with giving one's whole life in service, for instance with the determination of one's lifework? Everything! The decision of one's lifework on the Christian basis and the consecration of one's whole life to Christ are simply the governing of

life's major choices by that noble impulse which is inherent in our natures.

What is the life of the world but the life of the individual writ large? What are those illustrations of individual human need but parables of our corporate life? Only the poverty of our imaginations prevents our seeing it so. There is the child stumbling into the gutter—for our humanity when viewed with perspective is hardly more than an overgrown child, stumbling along, confused and blind, not knowing whither it is going, likely at no distant future to fall into the gutter of civilization's collapse. A former British ambassador to the United States put it thus:

> In Europe we know that an age is dying. Here in America it would be easy to miss the signs of coming change, but I have little doubt that it will come. A realization of the aimlessness of life lived to labor and to die having achieved nothing but avoided starvation, and of the birth of children also doomed to the weary treadmill, has seized the minds of millions.[1]

There is the wronged girl—literally, in our problems of immorality, drink, prostitution, and all the rest; but far more compellingly in the vast masses of humanity—men, women, little children, all ages and types and classes—sadly wronged, born into the world with less than a fraction of decent opportunity for living. There is the foolish friend—could there be any truer picture of life in our day than a humanity wasting divine possibilities in mad folly and degenerating dissipations and mutually destructive conflict?

The two mirrors reveal to us a contrast which no honest man can refuse to confront, a contrast which has in it the right to determine your life and mine. Here is the actuality—a society split into thousands of jostling and jeal-

[1] Sir Auckland Geddes.

ous fragments, cleavages by race, by nation, by wealth, by class, by birth, by social stigma, by faith, its life all too largely permeated with fear and envy and strife. Here is the possibility—a satisfying fellowship of friendly and co-operative men and women. What fools we mortals are! Was there ever more arrant nonsense than the world we have made for ourselves? Could there ever be a more impelling summons to a full gift of life?

Men talk about feeling no call to service. As long as one family in your home town tonight goes to bed without food and clothing and opportunity adequate for its need; as long as one woman walks the streets of New York or St. Louis or Los Angeles, bartering her body and her womanhood for the cash of men like ourselves; as long as there is a corner of the earth's surface where the kingdom of God has not yet begun to penetrate—so long is there an absolute and inescapable obligation upon us to give ourselves wholly and for all time in the service of others.

Let us bring it a trifle closer home. As long as there is a student on your campus who is cut to the quick by the cold shoulder of exclusion; as long as there is an election dominated by fraternity politics, or a classroom poisoned by dishonesty; as long as there is one student on your campus who is wasting through foolishness or aimlessness or vice the possibilities which are in him—so long there rests upon us an absolute obligation to give all that we have here and now to make that life over into what it might be. We may refuse if we choose, but let us not say that we fail to see the obligation resting upon us; for, if our imaginations are quickened at all, there has arisen before us a twofold view—a realization of that campus as it is, a vision of that campus as it might be. And, if the spirit of Christ has been allowed to get a fraction of a hold upon our minds, there is growing within us a desire to throw all that we are into the resolution of that contrast.

II

What are some of the implications of this challenge to service?

First of all, there is the implication in the use of your life and your time right now—the things on the campus within and without the curriculum to which you give yourself; the time various campus activities will command; the attitude you take up toward every fighting issue—toward fraternities, toward campus honesty, toward athletics, toward campus morality; the value you place on those things which the campus holds most dear—long strings of honors in the yearbook, a chainful of charms, ability to swing elections, campus-wide popularity, the label of "campus leader."

III

Second, and of much greater importance, is the implication for the determination of where your whole life shall be enlisted, your lifework decision. There is no possibility of overstressing the importance of the choice of lifework. First, its importance for ourselves. We like to think that we are masters of our fates and captains of our souls, the free and autonomous makers of our own characters. As a rule, the younger we are, the more naïvely and confidently do we hold that view. But the more one studies life, the more untrue this philosophy appears.

Imagine three brothers—triplets as alike as the proverbial peas in a pod, with the same heredity, the same upbringing, the same schooling, the same friends—who go off to colleges of quite different types, a traditional eastern university, a small midwestern denominational college, a West Coast school of engineering. Four years later you meet three entirely different men molded beyond any possibility of their realization by the atmosphere of their col-

lege experience. Or, better still, think of three men coming from the same college and the same general background with much the same habits and characters and even objectives, who enter quite different vocations, one as a bond salesman on Wall Street, one to take up literary work on a prominent monthly, one to enter the Christian ministry. Five years later they meet to discover that they hardly know each other. They no longer read the same books, they no longer talk about the same things, they no longer hold the same ideals and objectives. They have been molded beyond any possibility of their realization by their several jobs.

It is not true that we are masters of our fates and captains of our souls. It is true that for the most part we are masters of the few great choices of our lives, the choices of the environmental influences which are to mold us; these choices, once made, are the masters of our fates. This places the central importance in life where it belongs, on the few great choices of molding atmospheres. Far more than we are willing to admit, the man is a mirrored reflection of these influences. And of these, the first permanent choice and almost the most important is the vocational atmosphere, the choice of our lifework.

It is of incalculable importance to us. But it is of incalculable importance to the world, also. There is much current talk to the effect that it makes no difference to the world what job a man chooses. "Can't you be a Christian in any job? It doesn't make any difference what you do, provided you live and work according to Christian principles." How obviously absurd! Could one say that Thomas Edison would have been as great a servant of mankind had he been a drugstore clerk, mixing ice-cream sodas with the same thoroughness and efficiency with which through the years he sought to master Nature's secrets? Could one say that Harry Emerson Fosdick would be as useful to the world were he a streetcar conductor,

ringing up fares with the same earnestness and consecration with which he interprets truth for men? Especially if soda-water clerks and streetcar conductors happened to be a drug on the labor market. It is of incalculable importance to the world where the energies and consecration of our lives are to be enlisted.

How, then, shall that decision be made? If you were able to analyze your own mind, you would discover two main considerations struggling for first place in the determination of your decision. They correspond to the two great theories of lifework choice. One approach starts with yourself. It says, measure your own capacities. Appraise and ask others to appraise your greatest aptitudes. Study your own deepest interests and desires. What do you most *want* to do? Find that place in the world where those aptitudes will fit best, those interests and desires will find fullest expression. In brief, do the thing which you can do best.

But there is another theory, held by a few. It starts with the world. Measure the world's need, it says. Appraise the great movements and the pressing problems of your day. Study what most needs to be done in the world, where men of character and consecration and moderate ability are most needed on the firing line of the world's struggle. Then see if your life will fit there; if so, that is the place for you.

There ought to be no necessary antithesis between these two approaches, it is true. And they have been thrown into sharp contrast in order that you may see them the more clearly. But in all too many of us there is a real antithesis. If you know the working of your mind and are ruthlessly honest with yourself, you will discover that you are approaching the question with one or the other consideration dominant. Have you ever taken a piece of green cloth and looked at it under the artificial light of a store window and then taken it for examination out under the

white light of the sun? The color appears almost wholly different. So it is with this great determining decision of our life's vocation, whether we view it in the light of our own desires and our own abilities, or whether we view it under the white light of our world's need. It is the difference between "the thing we can do best" and "the best thing we can do."

If this thought concerning the challenge to service is correct, there can be only one major consideration guiding our thinking as we face this decision. Not "Where will I fit best? where will I get ahead fastest? at what am I best qualified to succeed?" but "Where am I needed most? where can my talents serve best? where is the spot in this gigantic adventure of making over the world where I can count for most?" Not willingness to remold life in accordance with the truth you see, but *eagerness* so to remold life. That is the principle which is mandatory in time of war. Of few men of the American forces could it be said that soldiering was the thing they could do best. They were good farmers and salesmen and dentists, but most of them were mighty poor natural soldiers. Yet under the stress of the nation's emergency, the best thing they could do was to fight. If those principles are sound in the crisis of war, how much more in the crisis of peace! The difference is this: in war it is a principle of conscription; in peace it is a principle of voluntary enlistment.

Let it not be thought that such a decision is sacrificial; in the larger view, it is a selfish decision, for there is only one place in the world where a man can know true happiness and the deepest satisfaction. It is that place in which he has the inner assurance that his life is counting for most in the glorious undertaking of transforming the world as it is into the world as it might be. Many and many a man who has dared so to choose his lifework would rise up to say that through that type of decision he has found himself and life.

IV

There is a *third implication* of the challenge to service—*the relation we are to have to certain human institutions and activities.* I think especially of the Church. Men ask why they should be interested in the Church. "What has the Church to give me? Why should I support the Church?" One might reply, "The question 'What has the Church to give me?' has no point at all. If you are going into it for that reason, stay out; there are too many self-centered spiritual sponges in our churches already. As a matter of fact, the Church has a very great deal to give you. You need it and need it desperately. But you will discover neither your need nor its gift with your present attitude."

To him who views life's problems in the light of the world's need, not his own desires, the great question is, "What is the place of the Church in this picture of which we have been speaking?" Is the Church a constructive or a destructive influence in society? If constructive, then despite all its weaknesses which you fully realize, you throw your resources into it, for it is, on the whole, in the same enterprise in which you have invested everything; you are partners in the same job. Is the Church a necessary institution? Must mankind always have a Church? Has it an essential place in your ideal for society? If the answer is "Yes," then, not despite its weaknesses but because of its weaknesses, it deserves all you have of loyalty and support and effort—for the redemption of the Church is then part of your life task of the redemption of the world. What is true of your attitude to the Church must be true of your relation to all other constructive organizations and movements looking toward the New Day.

And the answer to these questions *is* "Yes." This is a task which we shall not accomplish alone. It is humanity's job, this remaking of the world; and it must be done by

groups working together. We have spoken of the resources of power through fellowship with God. Here there comes power into life through the linkage of our life with the resources of men. It is the fellowship of cooperation, of common effort. So only can the New Day come.

It is for this reason that we must always have a Church. Those who talk glibly about the impending disappearance of the Church know no more about history and the fundamental nature of human life than a wharf rat about the construction of an ocean liner. We must always have a Church, not because the leaders of religion have told us so, or because it is an age-old tradition of mankind from which we cannot free ourselves, or even because individual worshipers must have it for the nurture of their personal lives; we must always have a Church because the spiritual fellowship which is "humanity as it might be" can be brought into reality only through organized common effort, and will be preserved only through the common worship and common service of like-dedicated men. The Church of today, feeble as it is, is the best foretaste we have of the kingdom which shall be. It is for this reason that we align ourselves with the Church. We come to see that a Church *does* have an essential place in human life and we enlist in the existing Church as part of our general task of helping to create the ideal institutions mankind needs. But a strange thing happens to us. As we throw our energies into this feeble and despised institution, we awake to the realization that beneath its apparent feebleness there are hidden powers we had never suspected, powers which in some mysterious way seem to have source-springs far down in the depths of reality. We discover that it is doing for us far greater things than we are doing for it, that there are within us desires and needs which we had not recognized and which this weak reed we had thought to bolster with our strength has the power

to meet. We enlisted in the Church because we thought it needed us; we carry on because we know we need the Church.

V

These are some of the implications of service in terms of duty. But there are implications, too, in terms of success in the living of life.

1. *In the life of service, and in it alone, is to be found the life we seek.* The great words of today are self-fulfillment and self-realization. We all recognize the restless yearning for life among us, and we think that through self-realization we shall find that elusive thing, happiness—and so life. Yet I find some, at least, who have gone beyond that. They are sick to death of this search for self-fulfillment, sick of themselves and of thinking about themselves, and of seeking their own self-realization. It is themselves which they want to forget. I have heard many and many of them say, "If only something would come along big enough to pull us out of ourselves. What a relief that would be!" It is the disillusionment which must ultimately overtake all who follow the self-realization path. They are on the edge of discovering the secret of life.

It was no chance which led Jesus persistently, almost tiresomely, to put the emphasis on "doing." He spoke much of faith and some of what we should think about God. But he put the heart of his teaching and the climax of his emphasis *always* upon doing. That is the way he concluded his great teaching discourse, the Sermon on the Mount—"Not every man who says to me 'Lord, Lord!' will get into the realm of heaven, but he who *does* the will of my Father in heaven." That is the acid test of the Sermon. "The man who hears these words of mine and *does* them is like a sensible man who built his house on rock" (Matthew 7:21;24). And that is the way he con-

cluded the teaching of his entire ministry; for the passage which is probably the last public word Jesus ever said, in a very real sense the conclusion of his thinking, is a parable in which he states categorically those who will and those who will not win entrance to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 25:31 f.). What is it which determines men's destinies? What they believe? or what they profess? No. Those who have seen men in need—hungry, thirsty, wandering, naked, sick, in trouble with the law—and have *done* something about it, these are the ones who enter. That is the final test put to men; no other.

Jesus put his persistent emphasis here because he understood the unchanging laws of our natures which are rooted in the depths of our beings. We are by nature active beings. We are put here not primarily to think out philosophies or to enjoy fellowships, but to do a task. In the doing of that task we find life; through the doing of it, Jesus says, we enter the kingdom of God. Life carries at its very heart a paradox. Of the sayings of Jesus that which was on his lips more frequently than any other was, "The man who tries to save his life loses it; he who loses his life for a great cause finds it" (Mark 8:35). The world, most of us, most of our current undergraduate philosophies say, "Jesus was wrong." The restless dissatisfaction which is the issue of all this self-seeking should prove who is wrong.

Some forty years ago, a brilliant young Alsatian scholar still in his late twenties published a book which stirred the religious world more deeply than any other since Darwin's *Origin of Species.* It is still one of the most radical and disturbing interpretations of Jesus in print. Men said it would destroy the Christian faith if its conclusions were adopted. The author, an organist of first rank and our greatest living authority on the music of Bach, is undeniably one of the most brilliant minds of today. A few years later, the world was startled to hear that he had

given up his chair of theology, had completed a course in medicine, had raised funds to equip a hospital, had left all the associations and privileges of his academic life and had gone into the heart of Africa to one of the most dangerous posts known to medicine to minister to victims of the deadly sleeping-sickness fever. Why? He tells of it very simply in these words:

It became steadily clearer to me that I had not the inward right to take as a matter of course my happy youth, my good health, and my power of work. Out of the depths of my feeling of happiness there grew up gradually within me an understanding of the sayings of Jesus that we must not treat our lives as being for ourselves alone. . . . I had read about the physical miseries of the natives in the virgin forests; I had heard about them from missionaries, and the more I thought about it the stranger it seemed to me that we Europeans trouble ourselves so little about the great humanitarian task which offers itself to us in far-off lands. The parable of Dives and Lazarus seemed to me to have been spoken directly to us! . . . Moved by these thoughts, I resolved, when already thirty years old, to study medicine and put my ideas to the test out there.[2]

The result? He writes this from his primitive mission hospital in the heart of the primeval forest:

The operation is finished, and in the hardly lighted dormitory I watch for the sick man's awakening. Scarcely has he recovered consciousness when he stares about him and ejaculates again and again: "I have no more pain! I have no more pain!" His hand feels for mine and will not let it go. Then I begin to tell him and the others who are in the room that it is the Lord Jesus who has told the doctor and his wife to come to the Ogowe, and that white people in Europe give them money to live here and cure the sick Negroes. Then I have to

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[2] Albert Schweitzer, *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 82; *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest* (London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1945), pp. 1, 2.

answer questions as to who these white people are, where they live, and how they know that the natives suffer so much from sickness. The African sun is shining through the coffee bushes into the dark shed, but we, black and white, sit side by side and feel that we know by experience the meaning of the words: "And all ye are brethren. . . ."

To those who go among the colored people of their own accord and are willing to put up with all that is meant by absence from home and civilization, I can say from experience that they will find a rich reward for all they renounce in the good that they can do.[3]

Today Albert Schweitzer is not only one of the greatest minds in all the world; he is possibly the greatest Christian in all the world. Life has come to him by losing it.

We do not forget ourselves *in order to* find life. That defeats its own purpose. We forget ourselves because every noble impulse within urges us to do so. We forget ourselves and we do find life, for it is written into the nature of the universe itself that the fullness of the life we seek is an inevitable and unsought by-product of the kind of life we should lead.

VI

2. *Through the life of service and through it alone is to be found linkage with the resources of God.*

Let it not be thought for one instant that what we have called the life of service is an easy undertaking, that through it we come quickly and readily into the fullness of life. The spirit of youth in our age is too realistic for such self-deception. If it be true that as we step out upon this path of the absolute commitment of ourselves we first begin to know "life," it is also true that with that first step onto the path of service we first encounter the real adversaries of life.

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 93, 173.

Then it is that for the first time honest doubt harasses us. How can it be that in a world so largely consecrated to the sacredness of "things" a Purpose of Good for the transformation of that world is working itself out triumphantly? How can we understand that this unmerited suffering and that flagrant injustice and this crushing frustration of noble self-giving can be encompassed within an Infinite Love? If God be ever more ready to hear than we to pray and wont to do more than we desire or deserve, then why is it so difficult to be certain of him in life's crises; why is he so reticent in making available to us, as we battle on, the certainty of his support and the resources of his power? The true intellectual difficulties of religion begin, and we know that life is a struggle for faith.

Then it is that idealism's most dangerous enemy—disillusionment—confronts us. We pass from the buoyant confidence of youth into the deadening discouragement of experience. I would not for one moment minimize this experience of disillusionment. I have seen too many of the very best of our college youth year after year come out from graduation into the turmoil of the world with high vision and genuine consecration and then slowly slip into discouragement, then disillusionment, then defeat, then the cynical or kindly complacency which is the world's dominant philosophy, engulfed by powers of conventional indifference which they were wholly unprepared to meet. Too often we have sent men and women out with the enthusiasm of idealism in their hearts, but with no understanding of the tedious processes by which that idealism is to be translated into reality, with no fine tempering of the soul which alone can meet and defeat life's disillusionments. Be sure that if we take seriously this vision for our world which has possessed us, if the committal of our life to God's comradeship in the molding of his kingdom becomes the passion of our spirits, then an experi-

ence of discouragement if not disillusionment lies before us. Many and many a time our hearts will cry out silently with Bernard Shaw's St. Joan, "O God that madest this beautiful earth, when will it be ready to receive thy saints? How long, O Lord, how long?" And we know that life is a struggle for courage.

Then it is that we begin to understand the meaning of the Cross. The pathway of service will prove, *if* we follow that pathway through to its end, not to make life unintelligible but to make it profoundly intelligible. It will not separate us from God; ultimately it will bring us to God. For as the disappointment and perplexity which lie across that path meet us face to face, we shall find ourselves unconsciously turning more and more to Another who went the same pathway. We shall discover that in the words which he said and the spirit which he breathed there seems to be deeper meaning than we had ever realized, meaning which begins to make the whole course of that puzzling pathway intelligible. We shall find the footsteps of our imagination, quite unconsciously and driven by some inner compulsion, taking their way through a city's busy streets and out through its gates to a lonely hill without; we shall discover ourselves standing at the foot of the Cross. And as we stand there, there will come over us as there have come over multitudes who have stood there before us certain convictions which we sense but which we may find it very difficult to rationalize—that a mysterious principle which we see most clearly from the foot of the Cross is woven into the very fabric of this universe, that it is through the kind of self-giving we see there that life and the world are transformed, that the experiences of pain, disappointment, and defeat which have become so real to us are in some sense experiences of God himself, that "the Cross is a projection on the screen of history of what takes place in the heart of God

all the time."[4] We meet God at the foot of the Cross. Then we understand why the Cross stands at the center of Christianity. Then we say further with Joan:

> France is alone; and God is alone; and what is my loneliness before the loneliness of my country and my God? I see now that the loneliness of God is his strength; what would he be if he listened to your jealous little counsels? Well, my loneliness shall be my strength, too; it is better to be alone with God: his friendship will not fail me; nor his counsel; nor his love. In his strength I will dare, and dare, until I die.

And we know that God himself is in life's struggle.

But that is not all; the life of service, if we will follow it faithfully, will take us one further step. It is popular today to speak of Christianity as the religion of the Cross. That is not true. Christianity is not the religion of the Cross; it is the religion of the Resurrection. It is not the religion of vicarious sacrifice; it is the religion of a certain and joyous triumph through and over that sacrifice. We are not speaking of any particular theories of Jesus' resurrection, but of the central conviction of Christianity which became real to the first disciples in their experience of the resurrection—the conviction that beyond the apparent defeat of today there lies the glory of tomorrow and that, in the end of the day, God and the Good do prevail. This, rather than any theories about the Cross, was the faith of the first disciples which brought Christianity into the world. It has been the faith of the Church whenever Christianity has held power for the world. It is a radiant, a triumphant, a power-bringing faith. There is nothing which our world so much needs now as a Gospel of the Resurrection.

Take one example only—our faith in ideals. The progress of our spirits with regard to moral idealism should

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[4] W. H. Moberley in *Foundations,* B. H. Streeter, Editor (The Macmillan Company, 1912), p. 322.

mark three stages. The first is the naïve idealism of youth; that we all know. The second is the disillusionment of experience; there most of mankind rests. But there is a third—the seasoned and realistic idealism of maturity. It is the mature mind's discovery that those exuberant ideals of youth were *true*—much less clear and unmistakable than our early enthusiasm had imagined, much less easy of realization than our youthful confidence had supposed—but *true*. No idealism is sound which is not the tempered product of the furnace of life's realities. But no realism is full which does not issue in such seasoned idealism. That is part of the faith of the Resurrection—the mature mind's certainty of the reality of youth's dreams.

One whose right to speak we have already noted has put it thus:

> The conviction that in after life we must struggle to remain thinking as freely and feeling as deeply as we did in our youth, has accompanied me on my road through life as a faithful adviser. Instinctively I have taken care not to become what is generally understood by the term, a man of ripe experience. . . . What we are usually invited to contemplate as "ripeness" in a man is the resigning of ourselves to an almost exclusive use of the reason. We believed once in the victory of truth; but we do not now. We believed in our fellow men; we do not now. We believed in goodness; we do not now. We were zealous for justice; but we are not so now. We trusted in the power of kindness and peaceableness; we do not now. We were capable of enthusiasm; but we are not now. . . .
>
> Grown-up people reconcile themselves too willingly to a supposed duty of preparing young ones for the time when they will regard as illusion what now is an inspiration to heart and mind. Deeper experience of life, however, advises their inexperience differently. It exhorts them to hold fast, their whole life through, to the thoughts which inspire them. It is through the idealism of youth that man catches sight of truth, and in that idealism he possesses a wealth which he must never exchange for anything else. . . .

The ripeness, then, that our development must aim at is one which makes us simpler, more truthful, purer, more peace-loving, meeker, kinder, more sympathetic. That is the only way in which we are to sober down with age. That is the process in which the soft iron of youthful idealism hardens into the steel of a full-grown idealism which can never be lost.[5]

To such a ripe conviction the pathway of service should lead us. And then we know that in life's struggle, our powers are linked with the limitless resources of the Living God.

VII

In their quest for a fuller and more worthy life, men have always sought power from religion. And they have always tended to expect it to come upon them in some miraculous and supernatural way. To some it has come with suddenness and with cataclysm. But many have waited and waited in vain. Religion has disappointed them because they sought from it something it was prepared to give, but have sought it by ways through which religion could not give it. For we must believe that the powerful life is the normal life, that God is ever seeking to make available through the normal channels of our spiritual living power fully adequate for our needs, and that the laying hold of this power is not a matter of some mysterious gift from on high but of the fulfilling of the conditions for the full health of our spirits. To the God we have sought to discover in these studies, there must be one primary condition—the alignment of the objectives of our effort with the purpose of his life.

The logic of this truth is inescapable. And it finds practical confirmation in the spiritual experience of the great Christians. But to many, especially those who feel them-

[5] Albert Schweitzer, *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 97f.

selves impotent for any significant accomplishment, it may sound abstract, impractical. Let us see whether we can make its meaning more explicit.

Brooding over the fallible, faltering, petty life of this world is a Power which seeks to draw it on to what it might be—a Power which calls it both through the vision of its true destiny and through the immanent urge toward its own realization. The goal is a far-off ideal which we dimly visage but clearly sense—the kingdom of God. The method of its realization is the tedious toil of human effort whenever men sense the goal and give themselves to its fulfillment. The ways of aiding it forward are innumerable—through the portrayal of beauty, the service of need, prophetic proclamation of an ideal long before the day of its acceptance, the worthy interpretation of truth, or the simple ministry of comfort, relief, restoration. It is the true destiny of the world's life—this purpose of God for the slow realization of a distant ideal. Now, the significant fact is that the route of its realization carries power at every point where a human life touches it with intention to help, laying the direction of that life's personal purpose in the course of the world's destiny.

Similarly, within each human life is a highest potentiality, its destiny. What that may be for different persons will vary greatly, its precise character largely determined by native equipment, early influences, special interests and aptitudes which have developed in the first twenty or so years. But, whatever its specific character in the individual, that potentiality lacks its maximum power, its maximum usefulness, and its maximum happiness unless it finds realization and reinforcement in alliance with the main course of the world's progress.

That alliance may occur inadvertently as we release the noblest intuitions of our spirits and allow them to guide us into one or another aspect of the world's life; it is best that way. Or we may think it out. Then we achieve the

power we seek for life as we recognize more fully God's purpose for the world, as we sense more accurately the specific character of our own truest life, and as we link the latter to the former at the points where they most nearly touch.

Put in another figure, to recognize the motif of one's own spirit; to discover its place in the harmony of the world's destiny; fearlessly, steadily, at whatever cost, to attune one's purposes and practices to that harmony—that is to possess the fullest power intended for life.

Recent psychology is bringing added confirmation to this principle. What life most requires for its fullest freedom and fruitfulness is an "integrating purpose"—a goal out beyond and ahead, in devotion to which the tangled threads of conflicting purpose are ordered, the disorganized emotions are unified, and the life can be drawn out beyond itself with a power which self-concern could never furnish.

Though the ways of such harmonization are many—in research, in art, in constructive thought, in business, in useful endeavor—in this commonplace world most of us commonplace folk are likely to find it through work in some area of obvious need. All about us at every moment are tasks to be done, needs to be met, adventures to be dared. Some are exceedingly homely—the needs of a lonely life, of the postman and the bootblack and one's best friend. Some are exceedingly complex and commanding—maladjustment, corruption, stupidity, injustice in our corporate life. Each need implies tasks. It is these tasks which are the Christian God's chief concern. As one shares his concern by participating actively in his tasks, one is most likely to enter into a certain and growing fellowship with him.

Then life takes on new meaning. The lights and shadows of human experience stand forth in bold relief. One understands why the seers and leaders of mankind have

spoken so much of suffering and tragedy and frustration; why a Cross is the symbol of our religion. Insight increases. Slowly across one's consciousness comes the realization that one's life has found its full outreach. Into it and through it is flowing all the power of which it is healthily capable. The lifeblood of religion is already coursing through and transforming one. To change the figure, a man may discover, not that he stands at the portal of religion, but that religion has silently built around his life a sanctuary in the center of which he now stands. He finds himself in a Presence which claims him, renews his powers and then leads him out into all life.

To the majority of those marked by religion's resources, power has come not deliberately sought but largely unsought. In its truest experience religion is not something to be striven after and acquired; it is not something which you get, but something which gets you. The power we seek from religion is not won by straining after it and laying hold of it; it is a gift to those who enlist in religion's obvious tasks. The principal pathway to the resources of religion is commitment.

VIII

It is said that when one of the great suspension bridges across the East River in New York City was under construction, much of the preparation had been completed when the engineers ran upon an obstruction in the bed of the river at a point where one of the great piers was to be placed. An old barge had sunk and become imbedded in the mud of the bottom. Steel cables were made fast to the obstruction and connected with powerful engines on the bank, but the barge would not move. Then derricks were placed on rafts, the rafts floated out into the river above the wreckage and an attempt made to lift the barge in that way; still it could not be moved. The services of divers

were employed, but with no success. The experienced engineers in charge were baffled. Then a young lad just out of technical school asked for permission to try his hand. Half derisively, his superiors consented. At low tide the youth had an empty barge towed out into the river just above the construction and its ends made fast to the ends of the barge which was imbedded in the mud. Then he left it there. As the tide came in from the Atlantic Ocean, up through the Narrows and into the East River, the barge on the surface of the water was lifted, the barge at the bottom came with it, it was towed away, and the construction of the bridge resumed. The young engineer had linked to his task the limitless power of the ocean tides.

It is a parable of our life. For just in so far as we place the purpose and the consecration of our life in the main stream of God's great purpose for the world, we link the weakness of our human resources with the immeasurable strength of God himself.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Christian Movement in Today's World

THESE ARE DAYS which are testing to the last limit the optimism and the hope of every intelligent and informed person. We live in a world which threatens to break in pieces before our eyes.

On the very eve of this epoch of "Great Wars," the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, having struggled tirelessly but fruitlessly all through the night to avert World War I, was standing in the window of his office overlooking Downing Street just before dawn as the London street lights were being extinguished one by one. Turning to a colleague, he declared: "The lights are going out all over Europe. We shall hardly see them rekindled in our lifetime."

II

Face to face with that unpredictable yet alarming future there stands you or I, John Jones, or Susan Smith. How absurd that seems! To be sure, each of us has his or her part to play. But, face to face with that future, each of us is relatively impotent *unless* his meager personal powers are caught up within and given significance by a far greater reality. In our time, mere individualism is passé.

Nothing but a great corporate reality can struggle effectively against demonic corporate might. Nothing but a great corporate reality can stand securely amid the disintegration of war and revolution. Nothing but a great corporate reality can count significantly in a day of mass movements and global conflict.

Face to face with that unpredictable yet alarming future there stands the Christian Church. How absurd that seems likewise! The "First Northern Presbyterian Church" of Pinville, western South Carolina; the "Christian Church" at Main and Market Streets, Middletown. It *is* absurd, too, *unless* that church's meager energies be caught up in some far greater force. Let us be brutally honest. Your church, my church, our local parish church is relatively impotent, in the face of that future, except it be a part of a far greater Church.

Face to face with that unpredictable yet alarming future there stands the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. or the Methodist Church or the Protestant Episcopal Church or the Congregational Christian Churches. Great as each of these is, notable as its heritage may be, every one of these Churches is a pitiable, weakling thing in the face of today's world. Each of our Church denominations, by itself, is relatively small in membership, restricted in outlook, limited in contacts with all segments of the population, meager in influence—*alone*.

Face to face with that unpredictable yet alarming future there stand the Churches of North America, the twenty-nine Protestant and Orthodox denominations with a total membership of some 32,000,000 American Christians who recently joined to form the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States.[1] *There* is a force which, if

[1] In all that follows, the Roman Catholic Church is excluded from consideration. At certain specific points and within very limited areas, there is the possibility of co-operation with that Church, especially in local communities. But, so long as the Vatican maintains a studied aloofness from

really united and mobilized for action, might wield important influence in the life of the nation. But even they are relatively impotent in the face of today's *world.*

The only Church with great significance for that world in this future would be the whole Church-of-Christ-throughout-the-whole-world. But is there any such thing as a "World Church"? And how important is it?

III

Just here is the paradox which baffles many of us in our attitude toward the Church. The Church which would hold interest for our thought and appeal for our loyalty is a World Church, the Church as a significant force in the world of tomorrow. But the only Church we know is that of which we think at once whenever the word "church" is spoken—the "First Northern Presbyterian Church" of Pinville, western South Carolina, or the "Christian Church" at Main and Market Streets, Middletown, all too often marked by piddling pettiness and divided ineffectiveness.

Moreover, as we move in thought from the local congregation through the denominations and the churches of North America toward the World Church, we move from the church which is most tangible, most real to most Christians, toward the Church which is most truly our ideal of "The Church" but also most intangible; from the church which is most familiar and which asks our support toward the Church which we are feeling after and which might command our devotion. We believe in the Church Universal, but we are asked to serve and worship in the church at Miller's Crossroads. As Bishop Angus Dun has

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the rest of Christendom and will recognize no Christian body except itself as truly a Church of Christ, there is no prospect whatever of significant collaboration. To avoid tiresome repetition, this mighty and weighty exception to world Christian unity is not specified hereafter; but it should be constantly borne in mind.

said, "We turn to the churches, and they bear witness to the One Church. We look for the Church, and find the churches. Where is the Church among the churches?"

IV

This paradox points to the two poles or foci of that total reality which is Christ's Church. Moreover, this duality corresponds closely to the duality which is one of the most fundamental and important characteristics of human life always.

Each one of us lives out his life in a particular day and era and locality and situation. Our epoch and surroundings enormously influence our life's experiences and outlook. It is this fast-changing panorama of outward circumstance which gives life its movement, its novelty, its adventure.

But there are also episodes, essentially unchanging amid the swift alteration of public events, which each person traverses in much the same fashion, whatever his time or place. In every age and at every moment of history—during prosperity and depression, on frontier plains and amid urban clamor, in luxury and in poverty, upon the smooth current of fair times and within the whirlpool of war or social convulsion—a woman writhes in anguish of body, terror of mind, and yet exultation of spirit in the unique yet ever-repeated experience which is childbirth. Two young persons bend over the helpless mite of humanity which together they have brought into the world, dreaming for it a future that it can never achieve, giving to it love, sacrifice, faith that it may never adequately appreciate and can never fully repay. The wee life grows and cuts teeth and learns to toddle and to tattle, and passes through the familiar epidemics of mumps and measles and chicken pox and puppy love. Each life senses the awakening of strange new forces within, frightening in their

power, baffling in their unfamiliarity, intriguing in their mystery. We fall in love, with romance and poetry and high expectation—Isaac and Rebekah, Romeo and Juliet, Aucassin and Nicolette, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett; the dress and times change, the inner experience but little. Each soul fights a solitary struggle with discouragement, loneliness, and the world's misunderstanding and cruelty. Men are baffled before the enigmas of children born blind, of disease and nature's cruel indifference; the Problem of Evil does not greatly alter with the passing ages. And the only satisfying light upon those enigmas shines from rare spirits who triumph gloriously over handicap and injustice, proving life good. Still creeps on old age. The spark flickers, and is gone—death is precisely the same for every generation. These are the aspects of all human living that give it stability, beauty, deep satisfactions.

Life has two aspects always, which Professor Hocking distinguishes as the world of the "public order" and the world of the "private order." Each brings distinctive gifts to our experience and to our understanding. Too exclusive concentration upon the first creates a superficial, harsh, worldly nature. Preoccupation with the second leads to undue subjectivism, softness, morbidity. Both together constitute the "reality" of man's existence. It is their interplay in mutual stimulus and balance that makes possible the breadth and depth and height of human living at its best.

One reason why youth, especially college youth, often find religion so uninteresting, the Church so irrelevant, is because the world in which they dwell is unavoidably but notoriously abstract and unreal. By students those characteristics will be resented, but they happen to be true. The university, far more than its citizens ever realize, is a world of its own and a world apart. Those who inhabit its privileged universe as students are very largely removed

from normal home life, normal community life, normal associations with the masses of their own generation.

In terms of the distinction just made between the "public" and the "private" orders, the eager concerns of healthy and idealistic young people center largely upon the throbbing drama of public events. Especially is this the case in a day like ours when the future for mankind appears to hang on the meaning of each morning's headlines.

Yet even here, inevitably, youth views that world mainly from a detached perspective as a bystander rather than from within the maelstrom as a participant. That is one reason why youth's understanding of world issues is never wholly adequate. Moreover, youth's attention tends to focus on the larger but more distant problems rather than upon the pettier but nearer scene where the great issues find expression in miniature—upon achieving world peace rather than the effecting of a harmonious, co-operative university community; upon racial reconciliation in the nation rather than the position of Negro and Jew and Oriental in their college; upon corruption in business rather than cheap and childish cheating in the classroom; upon political partisanship in Washington rather than the petty politics of the campus; upon social transformation on the grand scale rather than realistic attack upon the most puerile and indefensible system of social stratification and exclusiveness in the whole of American life, the fraternity-sorority racket. Here is the supreme unreality of collegiate idealism. We leave the campus no better for our having spent four years there. We go forth ill equipped for leadership in society because we have not acquired practical equipment available at our elbows. Failing to wrestle with the vices of the public order where they actually challenge youth face to face, we never fully comprehend their complexity and intractableness on the larger scene.

It is in the realm of private affairs, however, that youth's

experience is more seriously abstract and unreal. To be sure, adolescence may be scarred by emotional stress and the teen years studded with romance. And youth often suffers misunderstanding, loneliness, frustration. But these episodes of the inner life are hardly of the texture of maturity. Of the four crucial milestones along the normal human pilgrimage, which we outlined in Chapter One, one (the achieving of maturity) usually marks the transition from youth to adulthood; the second (marriage) looms above the horizon; the third (parenthood) and the fourth (death) belong to the dim distance. Yet it is in these events of the private order and their surroundings that folk normally live a good half of their existence. As we pointed out, it is in these circumstances characteristically that people "seek the Church." Many of us must have noted that as the generations just ahead of us leave college, start work, marry, establish homes in some town or city, and begin a family, they tend to return to the Church. Why? Because they lose their nerve or their sense of responsibility for world reform and settle comfortably back into the nirvana proffered by religion? Not a bit of it! Mainly, because they have left the unreal if alluring abstractions of university life and have returned to the real world of both public and private experience. If the Church often seems preoccupied with the personal problems of sickness, sadness, and separation, it is just because these are the features of existence with which most people are in fact occupied much of the time. This is not to excuse the Church's too frequent indifference and irrelevance to the great corporate issues. It is to set those shortcomings within a wider and truer context.

Now it is precisely at these two poles of human interest and experience that the Church has its significance. The Church meets men in both of these contrasted phases of their human pilgrimage—in the unique events which mark each man and each generation from all others, which give

to life movement, novelty, adventure, the world of the "public order"; and in those deep inward happenings which every member of each generation repeats in closely parallel fashion, bringing to life stability, beauty, and deep satisfaction, the world of the "private order." In the latter, the Church is the interpreter, counselor, confidant, support of individual men and women at those moments "when life matters most," "when life is most real." In that context, the Church is a necessity, a central necessity, not by accident or coincidence, but because of the very nature of human life, because it has to do with the deepest realities of life.

However, it is the other pole of all human experience which claims our attention in this chapter. It is the Church as a social reality, as an actual or potential influence of importance upon the desperate and tragic events of these times, with which we are majorly concerned at the moment.

V

Has the Church any meaning for this lacerated, gasping world of today? It is in the throes of that world's agony that men must live, as far into the future as eye can pierce. If the Church is to commend itself to our loyalty, it must demonstrate its relevance to humanity in this tragic hour.

To this task, the Church as the bearer of Christian Faith brings two special qualifications.

1. *Christianity speaks as an historic religion,* out of long association with human history and intimate familiarity with just such a world as ours. For nineteen centuries directly, and much longer indirectly, it has been watching, observing, studying the human pilgrimage. At every point, it has been closely involved with society and its problems.

To Christian Faith, there is almost nothing new, unexpected, untested.

It took its rise, the Christian Church, in a small, unimpressive, seemingly inconsequential band of religious enthusiasts.

It spread—with astounding rapidity—in all directions, through all classes and nations and races of the vast and polyglot Roman Empire.

Within two hundred years, we discover it firmly established in every principal center of population, of government, of education, and in thousands of smaller communities. We find it at the intellectual capital of the ancient world, Alexandria, meeting there two of the three greatest thought-systems of antiquity (Platonism and Stoicism), absorbing elements of each, correcting each by the power of its fuller truth, producing a more commanding and more enduring interpretation of Reality than either of these. We find it at the political capital, Rome, confronting there the most powerful imperial structure of the ages, adapting certain of its principles within its own framework, ultimately outliving that vast structure.

Within four hundred years, we see it acknowledged as the religion of the civilized world.

Within five hundred years, we observe it standing threatened but unshattered amid the crumbling ruins of the greatest material and intellectual achievements of the race—the only enduring institution in the disintegration of a whole civilization. We note it bearing within its own life most of what was salvaged from the accumulated treasures of a dying world, keeping them alive through dark and portentous centuries, delivering these treasures to the new culture of the Renaissance as it comes to birth. We see it furnishing unity and cohesion for the youthful and uncertain civilization.

Ten centuries after its origin, we discover it meeting the third great theory of Reality bequeathed by antiquity

(Aristotelianism), transforming it, and embracing it within a more comprehensive and adequate view.

We watch its endurance through eight succeeding centuries. Almost in our own day, we see it confronting the newest arrival on the scene of history—the Modern World.

Christian Faith embraces the deposit of those centuries of varied experience. It speaks with a worldly-wise, a knowing Voice.

It has watched tens of thousands, tens of millions of men and women in the most intimate happenings of their pilgrimage be born, come of age, struggle for truth, experiment with life, stumble, play the fool, fail, succeed, die. For Christian Faith, there is nothing unknown, untried in individual experience.

It has observed communities, nations, societies, civilizations come to birth, mature in the fresh powers of new vitality, achieve dominance, dissipate their substance in arrogant pretense and debilitating vices, fight, suffer defeat, decay, and die. It has noted political and economic systems, one after another, appear, declare the authority of their principles, and go down to disintegration through the old familiar follies ever repeated. For Christian Faith, there is nothing unknown, untried in mankind's corporate existence.

It has listened to dozens of new philosophies in the first flush of their confident youth, each one proclaiming its final grasp on truth. It has learned something from each. It has watched each pass from pre-eminence and give place for the next. There is, for it, almost nothing unexplored, unweighed in human speculation.

It has seen one religion after another arise, declare itself mankind's true Messiah and Christianity's successor, and pass to a position of secondary influence.

To Christian Faith, the rise and fall of empires, of economies, of civilizations, of philosophies are hardly more novel than the rising and setting of each day's sun.

Through all the changes and crises of the successive centuries, the Christian Church has endured. It has been caught within each passing culture and philosophy, enriched by its insights, revived through its vitality, contaminated by its follies and vices, threatened in its dissolution. Yet Christianity has shaken itself loose from fatal entanglement and has persisted to meet the next event—the one continuing reality in two millenia of change, decay, and rebirth.

Thus it is that from this wealth of tested experience, Christian Faith gives its wisdom for today's crisis. Yes, it speaks with a very old Voice, a very shrewd Voice, a very wise Voice.

VI

2. *Christian Faith speaks as a religion that takes history with utmost seriousness.* It exists within the flux of history. It derives its message from facts and persons that are of the stuff of history. Indeed, just here is one of the marks that distinguishes Christianity from other religions.

The truth that Christian Faith declares is not one of general principles to be discovered through speculation or mystic contemplation or magical disclosure or abstraction from life's course. It is truth *lived* amid the ongoing current of day-by-day happenings and to be known only in and through history's concrete events.

The world, as Christian Faith conceives it, is not a meaningless round of cyclic recurrence, or a vale of tears, or a prison-house constricting the self-realization of the human spirit. It is a stage upon which goes forward a drama of profound significance, through whose development souls are made and unmade, lost or fulfilled.

God, for Christian Faith, is no impassive Absolute removed from the blood and sweat of our human lot in perfect self-absorption. Nor is God a nexus of abstract principles, or a set of impersonal forces. He is a Doer, ever

at work in and upon this mortal scene, and there to be discovered and known.

Christianity's *message* concerns actual historical happenings through which God makes himself known. It finds its norm in the mind and career and faith of a genuine human Life. And its culmination is the conception of an Order of Existence (*the kingdom of God*) that surpasses complete realization within history and yet is to become ever more fully real within history. For its influence, Christianity rests confidence in the power of human lives and of its own historic Movement of life, *the Church.*

Indeed, Christianity comes to the world both as a Message and as a Movement. A Message—a body of convictions, of assertions concerning the World, Man, God, Society, and History, assertions believed to be true. But it is a Message derived from Christianity's age-long wrestling with the obdurate facts of history, and entrusting its proclamation and its hope to the influence of an historic Movement. In one perspective, Christianity is a *Message* that culminates in a Movement. In another perspective, Christianity is a *Movement* bearing a Message. The whole takes place within the toil and frustration, the triumph and fulfillment of that great historic reality that we call Society.

VII

Our survey of the Christian Movement in history in Chapter Five showed its major functions to have been five:

1. *custodian of the values of the past;*
2. *focal center for corporate life;*
3. *seedplot of creative, revolutionary forces in society;*
4. *spiritual confidant and sustainer and friend of ordinary folk;*
5. *promise of the ultimate destiny of mankind's pilgrimage.*

Now, turn toward that future whose specific details are so indiscernible but whose general character is so unmistakable.

1. We face the threat of the disintegration of our civilization, certainly of drastic and painful transitions with inevitable peril for the delicate and precious riches of the passing order. One of the great needs of our day is *a conserver of the funded values of the present.* Will the Christian Church again perform its historic mission? The greater question is, "If the Church does not, what agency will?"

2. No single feature of the immediate past was more significant than the disintegration of the great binding unities within society. The universal concepts that symbolized and sustained those unities—Christendom, Civilization, Liberty, Rights of Man, Brotherhood, Mankind—were fading from speech. They had lost grip upon human devotion and thus upon the actual structure of society. Their most widely acclaimed successor, radical individualism, with its fateful progeny—disdain of the great instinctive loyalties, denial of the essentially organic character of existence, fragmentation of the hard-built cohesions of civilized order, arrogant self-concern and self-conceit—stands in well-deserved discredit. In its place, the current trend is toward new unifications. This is the meaning of totalitarianism. With all our distaste for its specific forms, we dare not evade that meaning. It stands as an extreme judgment upon the unsound, and radically unchristian, individualism of our fathers' golden age. We shall never vanquish its might or correct its brutalities or fend off its recurrence unless we build a civilization as far removed from our fathers' complacent and corrupt utopia as from totalitarian tyrannies.

Here is the lesson: men's life, in small companies and in large, *must* have community. It *will* have it in our day.

The great question is, on what basis? around what center? Another of today's great needs is *an agent of cohesion for corporate life.* Sound and enduring unities can be effected only through recognition of the inherently, indissolubly organic character of all human existence. Unity in human affairs is authentic, and therefore safe, only beneath the overarching Divine Unity, that is to say, under universal recognition of the Universal Fatherhood of God. Of this truth, essential and structural to ordered society, the Church is the fallible earthly symbol. If the Church does not supply the center of unity for which men crave, the unity they *must have,* where else shall we look?

3. Our times require, too, *regeneration*—the discharge into a sick, chaotic, despairing humanity of forces for its rejuvenation and transformation. The dying civilization has lost its nerve and its faith. The "New Orders" proclaimed for both Asia and the West, with all their dynamic energy and fruitful corrective, represent retrogression, not advance. Humanity stands in desperate want of renerving.

Moreover, in every age, there is the indispensable task of proclaiming new and higher ideals for mankind's life, and of prophetic pioneering in their behalf. Who shall supply this indispensable service unless it be lonely, daring, indomitable figures thrust up from the commonplace tedium of the conventional church—perennial begetter of prophets and pioneers and martyrs?

4. Those who must adventure through difficult and uncertain territory ahead will meantime be traversing the familiar episodes that have faced every normal pilgrim in earlier periods. For most of them, the thrilling or frightening shape of outward events will have rather less importance than the soul-making and spirit-shattering happenings of personal life. Indeed, tensity and change in the public order will heighten inner stress. They will require

the services of that agency which "in every era and at every moment of history has been meeting folk in the intimacies of their souls' struggle, darkness, suffering, and triumph, where need pressed most heavily, ministering its light, its healing, its comfort, its challenge, its strength, its assurance."

5. Lastly, through its conception of the kingdom of God, and through its all-too-hesitant loyalty to that ideal, the Christian Movement holds before men *a norm for social endeavor and the goal toward which all true social advance moves.* More than that, falteringly, often pitifully, the Church offers a measure of demonstration of its reality. "Thus in broken and imperfect fashion, the Church is even now fulfilling its calling to be within itself a foretaste of the redeemed family of God which he has purposed humanity to be." [2]

VIII

But can the Church withstand the disintegrative forces which threaten to break our culture into fragments, especially in lands behind the iron or bamboo curtains where its living connections with the larger organism of World Christendom are severed and it must stand alone against perversion and persecution? Or, in Sir Edward Grey's figure, are not its lights being extinguished one by one?

There is a passage in the New Testament, one of the greatest, which speaks directly to these misgivings. It is the opening sentences of the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
That Word became flesh and dwelt among men.
He came into the world, and the world accepted him not.
He came to his own, and his own received him not.

[2] *The World Mission of the Church* (Madras Conference Report).

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.[3]

Here is an account of Christ's coming in the context of a massive interpretation of history and human life and reality. This passage declares two messages, in sharply contrasted mood—the one, a realistic, somber report of fact; the other, a no less sober but challenging forecast of faith.

He came into the world, and the world accepted him not.
He came to his own, and his own received him not.

This is the bitter pathos of Christ's first coming. And not of his first coming only. It is no less true today. It is a report of fact, of simple, bald, unchallengeable, brutal fact. Almost unendurable, it would be, if it stood alone.

But it does not stand alone. There is a second message in this passage:

In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
The light shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Or:

The light is still shining in darkness, for the darkness cannot put it out.

Here, in a few phrases, is this writer's philosophy of history:

The Light, which was in the beginning with God, which is God, the Light which illumines every man, the Life which is the Light of men—*this* Light continues to shine in darkness; and that darkness cannot extinguish it.

Those words were written nearly nineteen hundred years ago, less than a century after Jesus' death. Then, they were not a report of fact, but a forecast of faith.

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[3] This rearrangement of order represents the following verses of Chapter 1: 1, 14, 10, 11, 4, 5.

But nineteen hundred years of human history have proved them true. If there is one *fact* which stands forth on the face of the history, it is just this: nothing which those centuries have brought—the hostility of empires, the disintegration of civilizations, the transmutation of cultures and economies—*nothing* has ever succeeded in putting that Light out.

And what is the means by which the Light has persisted, unconquered? It has not been the words of Jesus, or the memory of Jesus, or the idea of the Christ, although all of these have been indispensable elements in that endurance. It has not been the Church as we customarily think of it, the ecclesiastical organization; though that organization has, in fact, been the indispensable "transmission belt," the skeleton and bony structure of the living body. It is the fact that that Light has created an instrument, a channel, a home, a Body in which it has persisted through all the vicissitudes of history—*the Christian Movement in the World,* that Living Organism in which the reality of Christ's mind and spirit and influence actually functions effectively in the concrete realities of the world's life. This is the Body of Christ.

As we have seen, through all the changes and crises of successive centuries, the Christian Movement has endured.

Yes, more than that. Not only has it survived. Within its Living Body, it has carried most of the salvage from their wreckage. And it has planted the riches thus preserved into the new civilization or culture to be born. Thus it has served as the seedplot of the creative and recreative forces and persons in each successive epoch. As William Temple has said:

> As we look forward, we peer into darkness, and none can say with certainty what course the true progress of the future should follow. . . . But, as we look back, the truth is marked by beacon lights, which are the lives of saints and pioneers; and these in turn are not originators of light, but rather re-

flectors which give light to us because they themselves are turned toward the source of light.

They have been enkindled—those saints and pioneers—from the light carried within that one continuing reality—the Christian Movement in the World.

This is the verdict of history:

The Light has continued to shine in darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

IX

That truth of history has been illustrated once again in these latter days.

In 1933 Hitler boasted to an associate:

I promise you that, if I wished to, I could destroy the Church in a few years. It is hollow and false and rotten through and through. One push and the whole structure would collapse. . . . Its day has gone.

Had a spokesman for the despised German Church been present, he might well have replied in the rejoinder of Theodore Beza to a similar boast by the King of Navarre:

Sire, it is the lot of the Church in whose name I speak to receive blows, not to inflict them. But may it please your Majesty to remember that the Church is an anvil which has worn out many hammers.

The testimony of history upon Hitler and the German Church was given orally in Dr. Albert Einstein's well-known words:

Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution [Nazism] came to Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities were immediately silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed

their love of freedom, but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks. Then I looked to the individual writers who as literary guides of Germany had written much and often concerning the place of freedom in modern life; but they too were mute. Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced thus to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.

And today, in this hour of ominous uncertainties?

In China, for instance?

Day by day, the curtain which separates us from that people with such deep natural kinship with our own, to whose welfare American friendship and philanthropy have contributed so much in the past century, thickens from bamboo to iron. Every Western influence and institution, perhaps even contact, may fall under hostile sway. We cannot foresee what the future holds as darkness deepens over the whole vast continent of Asia.

But we may venture one forecast, with fullest confidence. There will be one institution, possibly only one, which will survive, uncorrupted in its loyalty to truth and freedom—the Christian Church. Yes; and it will be the local church, at Main and Market Streets, in great cities and tiny hamlets all over China. Four times before in Chinese history, the Church has seemingly been overwhelmed by hostile forces bent on its destruction. Four times, the Church has gone underground, has lived, has emerged shaken but unshattered. It will do so again.

Likewise, in Poland and Rumania and Hungary and Czechoslovakia, even in Russia, something of the same thing may be taking place. Behind every curtain, the Church still exists and acts, the preserver of yesterday's

heritage, the guardian of today's best, the seedplot of tomorrow's promise.

There has been no previous testing time when the Body of Christ was so well fitted to discharge its century-old functions. For, in these latter days, that Movement has at long last become a world reality, coterminous with a society which must learn to endure as One World, or expire. That, likewise, is a commonplace for us.

In these days of conflict and retreat and bafflement, where, then, is our ground of hope as Christians? Well, clearly, it lies in no one enterprise, in no one piece of work, and in no one province or area. It lies in the whole vast sweep of Christ's reality within our world—or nowhere at all. It lies in the simple fact, which no one can gainsay, that the seed of the kingdom has by now been scattered and sown clean across the face of this scorched and storm-swept world. All over the earth it has fallen upon ground true to Jesus' insight. Much of it appears wholly without permanent effect. Some of it has sprung up with quick but shallow rootage and even today, under the unforeseen searing of persecution, is shriveling to ashes. Some has long since been strangled by preoccupation and indolence. But some has taken root—secure and tenacious rootage—among every race and people in almost every land. There is no telling in what obscure places, through what modest and unimpressive sowers, among what strange and unexpected folk, it has happened. But the surety of the harvest lies in the fact that it does not depend on any particular field or, indeed, land.

The resurrection, issuing in the birth of the Christian Church, introduced into history a new reality which cannot be overcome. For centuries that was an affirmation of faith. Today, like all prophecies of the future it is in some measure still a confidence of faith. But, the spread of the Christian Movement through the whole world has much

altered the whole perspective. Today, mankind knows no surer faith than that.

X

This, then, is the testimony of history. It is empirical verification of the forecast of faith of the Fourth Gospel.

This fact of history is no accident and no coincidence. It is so because of the very nature of reality itself. The Light which shone in Christ and which continues to shine through the persons who bear his imprint and the institutions which worthily carry his name *is* the Light that shone at Creation. As Paul says: "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

We go forth into days of deepening darkness. It is possible, though by no means certain, that that darkness may close in on most of our world for our generation. Of what can we be confident? Of one thing, at least: the one reality which is certain to survive, carrying with it through the darkness much of the accumulated riches of the past, ready to kindle new lights on the farther side of darkness, is the Christian Movement in the World.

We may hold that confidence because the Christian Movement, with all its weakness and its pettiness, its failures and its follies and its infidelities, is the bearer of the Ultimate Power of the universe. It is the bearer of the Light which cannot be overcome because it is lit from the Eternal Light of God himself. Against that Power, no human force can finally prevail. That Light, no man-made darkness can ever extinguish.

XI

We have quoted Sir Edward Grey's famous prophecy, "The lights are going out all over Europe. We shall hardly

see them rekindled in our lifetime." In these latter days we have become accustomed to think of an even deeper darkness. We speak of "blackouts"—blackouts of towns and cities, but also blackouts of education, of truth, of justice, of fellowship.

But those who have experienced a blackout know that the blackout is never wholly complete. Only to the external view does it appear so. Behind the curtains which convey to the external world a semblance of utter darkness, lights are still burning—shaded, guarded, perhaps kept secretly aflame, sometimes only tiny flickers.

So it is with our world's life in this hour. To the external eye, to the superficial view, over large areas of the world, it appears an almost total blackout. To keener discernment, behind the darkness lights still burn—sometimes mere flickers, sometimes gravely menaced, sometimes only secretly, sometimes with fierce, intense though hidden flame. From those candles and lamps, here and there and throughout this entire strife-darkened world, shall come the flames which shall yet rekindle the lights of humanity —flames kindled from him who is the Light of the World. They shall give their illumination until that day comes in which "there shall be no night, nor need of candle, nor light of the sun; for the Lord God shall give light."

Our task, yours and mine, in these darkening days, is to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon that Light.

CONCLUSION

Eternal Life

CHAPTER TWELVE

Eternal Life

Brothers, I for one do not consider myself to have attained anything; my one thought is, by forgetting what lies behind me and straining to what lies before me, to press on toward the goal, for the prize to which God through Christ Jesus is calling us (Philippians 3:13-14).

I suppose there is no subject connected with religion in which most college students are so little interested as immortality. In spite of that fact, I am going to suggest that in our final study we give our thoughts to the question of eternal life. And I do so for two reasons:

First, because the day will come (though for most of us it may still be far distant) when immortality will be a living question for us. We shall need to have some clear convictions about it. For the stark fact of death sooner or later comes close to the life of each of us, not so much when it threatens ourselves, as when it suddenly snatches from us someone whom we dearly love or someone for whose going there seems to be no purpose or reason. Then, though we may have fortified ourselves with all the arguments and convictions our minds can discover, we are likely to be swept off our feet into a confused sea of questionings. How much more if we have not thought about it at all! My conviction is that most of our intellectual

difficulties about religion are fundamentally far more moral than intellectual. But most of the rare cases I have known where students' lives were thrown into genuine confusion by intellectual uncertainty have centered around this experience—the loss of someone very close to them.

Second, only through consideration of the problem of eternal life shall we get close to the heart of the living of life today. True thinking along these lines, far from being idle and self-centered speculation of those who ought to be busy remaking the world, is the most direct path we can discover to the meaning of the Christian life for you and me here and now.

II

The first thing I want you to see is that there must be life beyond this earthly existence of ours—immortality—if there is any meaning in life at all, any sense in the whole business, and, therefore, any God. Most of us never achieve sufficient perspective to see that, but it is inevitable.

1. *Immortality is inevitable if there is any meaning for the individual human life.* It is all very well if you are thinking of someone who has lived a full and rich life, attained a noble and happy old age, and then passed on. But death does not always strike that way. What of the young lad of whom we spoke before, with all the promise of a glorious career before him, his family's great hope and one concern, stricken with pneumonia while still in his teens? What purpose or reason can there be in that—that a life, carefully brought to the very threshold of its real usefulness, should be then snuffed out with no great service to humanity? How much more true of the remarkable young woman of unique spiritual powers and influence who was struck down by meningitis on her wed-

ding trip! The universe is irrational as well as cruel indeed if that be the end of them. And it is not only their loss and their families' sorrow, but humanity's loss. In a world which is so much under the heel of selfishness, we cannot afford to lose lives like that. Yet the same is true to a lesser degree of all when death comes. Especially if through contact with Christ we have come into that vision for life of which we have spoken so often, we see an ideal to be achieved of which our life here, however long, can be only a beginning. It is only as graduation approaches that we feel we have begun to understand what college is all about, how fully to take advantage of its possibilities. Similarly, we are told, it is only as the end of life approaches that most of us feel we are beginning to get a solid grip on its meaning, are prepared to live it somewhat fully. If we become ready really to live and then are snuffed out, truly the whole thing is a farce. As Doctor Coffin well says, "If Jesus leads us into the life with God which we Christians know, he renders immortality indispensable if God is to maintain his own self-respect." [1] Unless this brief experience of ours on earth be simply chapter one in a long narrative, a tiny segment of a rounded whole which stretches far beyond the reach of our imagination, then there is no meaning in it at all.

2. *Immortality is inevitable if there is any meaning for the life of the world, the life of society.* The dominant thought of the last generation centered around the idea of progress. Men found life's meaning in the gradual evolutionary development of this world. The far-off establishment of the kingdom of God on earth was the goal; it was unnecessary and undesirable to look beyond that—for that gave existence its meaning and life its motive. But we are gradually coming to realize that all this was fallacious.

[1] Henry Sloane Coffin, *Some Christian Convictions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915), p. 216.

As Doctor Fosdick puts it, "This earth, once uninhabitable, will be uninhabitable again. After the lapse of millions of years which, however long they may stretch out, will ultimately end, our solar system will be gone, without even a memory left of anything that was ever dreamed of or done within it. The universe without God is not risky; it is a foregone conclusion; the dice are loaded. Whatever else may be true, progress on a transient universe has not done away with the need of God and life eternal." [2] All of that is true! And do you see what it means? In a universe which is doomed to eventual decay, in which every achievement of man's genius and progress is finally to crumble to dust and be blown away, if life's only meaning is to be found in our earth's struggle for continuance, then truly life has no meaning at all.

The dilemma to which we are driven is clear. On our belief in immortality hangs our belief in the rationality of the universe, on the rationality of life itself; or, to put it the other way, if life have meaning, then immortality must follow.[3] Our attitude toward eternal life *is* important, then, for on it depends our reasonable attitude toward life. To the man who thinks, to the man who knows the facts about life, our human existence must be a colossal, diabolical joke unless this life is merely the first stage of a long, long life beyond.

III

To be sure, that is not the path by which most of us reach our belief in immortality, but rather through two

[2] Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Christianity and Progress* (New York: Association Press-Revell, 1922).

[3] See John Baillie, *And the Life Everlasting* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), Ch. VI. This is by all odds the best single book on this subject. To those who want to undertake a thorough study of the question of immortality, I cannot commend it too highly.

other experiences: the confronting of death itself, and the confronting of certain lives. It is not those who are familiar with death, but those who face death for the first time who are most skeptical about the life beyond. Many have stood in the presence of death very often; some are called to minister in homes overshadowed by death many and many a time. And after the first shock of the starkness of death has passed away, there grows upon one an inescapable feeling, which is no blind hope, no pious doctrine, but much more akin to the wisdom of intuition, that this is not the end of the life which was there a moment ago, that one has witnessed a departure and not a death.

But there is a testimony to immortality far more convincing. It comes to us when we stand confronting certain lives, lives of great depth and richness and power, mankind's life at its highest. When we face human life like that, we sense that we are in the presence of something which is indestructible.

As one contemplates these witnesses of the spirit, the fate of the body becomes a passing incident in the continuity of their lives. It may be difficult to picture the form which this spiritual vitality may assume, but it is much more difficult to think of it as extinct.[4]

> Through such souls alone,
> God, stooping, shows sufficient o' his light
> For us in the dark to rise by.[5]

It has been said of the life of Jesus, "Its continuance was the corollary of its character."

True, the lives which so commend eternal life to us are few enough; but they *are* enough to prove the point—earnests to us of what eternal life shall be and is. They are examples in the concrete of the immortality of spir-

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[4] Francis G. Peabody, in *Religious Foundations,* Rufus Jones, Editor (The Macmillan Company, 1930), p. 139.

[5] Robert Browning, "The Ring and the Book," Pompilia's speech.

itual life. If there is a conservation of matter and a conservation of energy, how much more, in a universe which in its fundamental nature is spiritual, must there be the conservation of spiritual values. And because spiritual values have no significance apart from an individual personality, indeed become increasingly significant as the individuality of the person increases, there must be the continuance of our individual lives. Finally, therefore, we believe in immortality because we believe in a spiritual universe, and a spiritual universe which does not preserve the thing which it exists to produce—the individual human soul—can have no meaning. It is a fiasco and a fraud.

Something like this is the argument which Browning puts in the mouth of David. The young lad has been brought into Saul's tent to try with his lyre to rouse the great man from his stupor of melancholy. As he plays and sings, exerting his whole soul to bring life and power back to the old king, his mind is excited to go on to thought about God and the life beyond. From the passion of his own love for Saul, he catches a hint of the greatness of the Divine Love. From his eagerness to bring fullness of mortal life back to the man whom he loves, he infers God's eagerness to bestow that greater gift—the life which knows no end.

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator—the end, what began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvelous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?

And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection—succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?

. . . . . .

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand! [6]

IV

Concerning the nature of life after death, we know practically nothing save one thing—and we want to know only one thing—that it is good. Any attempt to imagine it or reconstruct it in its details is idle speculation. That it is in some sense a continuation of all that is best in this life is logical. That it is in some sense far better than the

[6] Robert Browning, "Saul."

best of this life we believe. That it continues us in the challenging tasks of this life we hope. But that it is good we are certain—that is one corollary of our basic Christian faith, that "to those who love God, all things work together for good." Death can therefore do us no harm. More than that no man wants to know.

To contemplate the future as opportunity, not to repent alone, but to repair; to think of life not as standing still, but as going on, and of death not as a condemnation but as a migration; to escape from a heaven of monotonous blessedness, and find a heaven of discovery, adventure, vision, and enlarging service; to be given a chance to redeem the blunders and follies which one so bitterly recalls; to believe that the shining witnesses of the spirit which have illuminated this life are undimmed by the incident of death and shine as the stars forever and ever—that is to think of the life after death, not as an answer to a problem, or as the satisfaction of a dream, but as the rational progress of the human soul from one room to another of a Father's House.[7]

V

You recall I said there was a second reason why we should consider the question of eternal life—because only so shall we get close to the heart of the living of life now. For the subject of our final study is not the future life but eternal life; not the time of immortality but the nature of immortality. For eternal life has no concern with time of life, but with quality of living. That is the thought of the New Testament. If you and I are not living eternally now, at this moment, there is a strong probability that we never shall. If there be a sharp division between the saved and the lost in the next world and some lives go to a hell of some kind, it is only because they have so lived in this world that they would not find them-

[7] Francis G. Peabody, in *Religious Foundations (op. cit.)*, p. 140.

selves at home anywhere else. As Henry Drummond once said, "Their spiritual lungs are not adapted to breathe the atmosphere of any other place." And if some lives go on into what we call immortality, it will only be because they have started to live immortally now and must continue so to live.

Do you see what light this throws on the meaning of our life now? It means that we are not starting off on a brief spurt of forty or fifty or sixty years, then to be snuffed out like gutted candles—a span of years to be crowded as full as time allows with experiences of whatever kind we happen to choose. It means that we are setting forth now on a path which stretches beyond the horizon the imagination glimpses—into eternity. In such a prospect, there is no room for the philosophy of "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." Ruskin once gave as the direction for true architecture, "So build as to build for eternity." We might say, "So live as to live for eternity."

Then immortality is no subject for the meditation of the aged and infirm. It is the livest, most vital, most contemporary subject for youth; for this life which you and I are now living, this moment, *is* eternal life; or it is nothing at all.

VI

What, therefore, is the nature of this life of which we have been speaking in these studies? What does it mean for us so to live as to live eternally?

1. *It is a life of light but not clear vision,* at least not clear vision of everything. For this life is an adventure, an adventure in part into the unknown. And adventure means uncertainty; it means bewilderment; even harrowing doubt. And so when life seems intolerably perplexing,

confusion without and turmoil within, let us remind ourselves that it is of the nature of our adventure—part of the game, if you will. Great truth *does* come, for the most part, step by step. "I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me."

2. *It is a life of peace but not calm.* There is no calm within; life continues an unremitting struggle—a struggle between two sets of impulses and motives and ideals—a struggle to be worthy to breathe the air of eternity. And there is no calm without—in the world in which our lives are to be lived. There, too, the struggle goes on ceaselessly, bringing its incessant and impelling challenge to us. But there is peace—the peace of inner unity and of steady effort.

> Peace does not mean the end of all our striving;
> Joy does not mean the drying of our tears.
> Peace is the power that comes to souls arriving
> Up to the light where God himself appears.[8]

3. *It is a life of achievement but not recognition, of satisfaction but not success.* It may bring that which the world calls success; more probably it will not. It may bring that which the world calls wealth; more probably it will not. It *will* bring an inner sense of at-onement—with ourselves, with the world, with God. It will bring an assurance that the powers of life are indissolubly linked with the resources of God, who shall, at the end of the day, bring his kingdom into reality. More than that, it will bring an immediate inner sense to each individual life, "Well done, good and faithful servant." For him who is in earnest about life, who is seriously seeking the fulfillment of his own destiny, what other end, what greater reward than that can life hold?

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[8] G. A. Studdert-Kennedy, "The Suffering God," *Rough Rhymes of a Padre,* Willie Woodbine, Ed. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918).

VII

The passage which stands at the head of this chapter is not the buoyant optimism of a young enthusiast; it is the considered declaration of an old man. It is not Paul's hope as he began his life's work; it is his faith as he faced his life's end—for the letter to the Philippians is probably the last letter he ever wrote. He is already past sixty, possibly past seventy years of age. His body, never strong, is wracked and torn and weakened by well-nigh incredible suffering, by scourging, by travel, by starvation, by shipwreck, by imprisonment. As he writes, he is chained to a Roman soldier. Ahead there is no prospect except further imprisonment and eventual martyrdom—a martyrdom which probably came a few months at the most after the letter was completed. It is the valedictory of a dying man. But it is the valedictory of a man who has absorbed into his being the experience of eternal life, who has already passed from death into life. And there is no better manifesto of purpose for a young life on the threshold of its career:

"Brothers, I for one do not consider myself to have attained anything; my one thought is, by forgetting what lies behind me and straining to what lies before me, to press on toward the goal, for the prize to which God through Christ Jesus is calling us."

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